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WITHDRAWN
FROM STOCK

COMMUNION AND FELLOWSHIP

COMMUNION AND FELLOWSHIP

AN ATTEMPT TO INDICATE A WAY TO A FULLER PARTICIPATION IN THE COMMUNION SERVICE

BY THE VERY REV.
R. O. P. TAYLOR
PROVOST OF CUMBRAE CATHEDRAL

WITH A PREFACE BY
THE RT. REV.
G. H. S. WALPOLE, D.D.
BISHOP OF EDINBURGH

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PREFACE

FELLOWSHIP is now much in the air. We have come to feel—and rightly—that it is of the essence of Christianity, and where it does not exist Christ is not. And in our thoughts of it and how it may best be inspired we naturally look back to that crowning example of it which Christ gave in what we call the Lord's Supper, where, in ways which we cannot grasp, He Who was so infinitely above and beyond those who were at the time His guests took them into closest fellowship with Himself, and lest its lesson should be lost bade them perpetuate it. Now in the midst of the controversies which have raged round the Eucharist this side has been forgotten. In the natural eagerness to maintain the reality of Christ's presence and to keep alive the memory of His Passion and Death,

the Fellowship side has largely been overlooked. Provost Taylor has therefore done good service to the Church in bringing this again to our minds in a fresh and original way. He helps us to see it in its simplicity, free from the dogmatic prejudices which have gathered around it. I am therefore glad to have the opportunity of commending this book, being so sure that all who read and study it will be thankful to find that which, though it lies at the heart of the subject, has been widely missed.

G. EDENBURGEN.

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COMMUNION AND FELLOWSHIP

I

CLUES TO EXPERIENCE

WHAT is written about the Communion is written, and there is no need to re-write it. But what is experienced at the Communion, what can be done at it and by it, what opportunities of fellowship and service it affords has not been written down, and it is high time that it was. For we desire to speak what we know, not just to repeat what we have been told: we wish to discover the ways in which the service is an opportunity of performing real service to our fellows. By way of a beginning I have made this book out of my own experiences. These are not put forward as being in any way remarkable: indeed my belief is that just because they are in no way unusual my defining them in words may help others to find expression for what

they have felt but vaguely, that so they may be able to comprehend more clearly and act more purposefully in the future. The book is cast in the shape of a description of the Communion Service, following the well-known Anglican form point by point, so that the reader can verify and develop whatever is here put forward in the actual course of the service. I hope that it may serve to indicate the path along which one very average person has been enabled to progress into some knowledge of things spiritual, so that others may take advantage of the way, without having to delay while they search around, scarce knowing whether there be a road to knowledge or not. As I shall be dealing with the Communion from our human point of view, there will be no attempt to consider fully the action of God in the Sacrament, nor will points of theoretical controversy be considered. My aim is practical and confined to what we can perceive and do. So I pass by many points which would have had to be included in a complete treatise on the Sacrament.

One difficulty which is inherent in the subject needs pointing out. I am attempting to describe a sphere of spiritual life. In doing

so it is impossible to pin one's attention exclusively on one single part at a time, because every part is knit up with the whole. The same factors keep emerging and must be mentioned again and again. Consequently, a certain amount of repetition has been unavoidable, though I have tried to minimise it as far as possible.

I am not setting out to impart information but to help the reader to gather knowledge for himself. He must, therefore, try to ascertain what his own experience of the Sacrament has already meant to him and what he has discovered about its nature in actual practice. This probably amounts to more than he would expect. The Communion is a way in which our Lord has arranged to come into personal contact with each individual. No one is capable of completely perceiving Him as He comes, or of grasping all the effects produced by contact with Him, but some kind of perception, some power of appreciation is latent in everyone. The vision may be dim and ill-developed, but the capability is there and has been evoked to some extent however slight. Very, very little may have been seen or felt, but that little of his own is more important to

a man than all which the great seers relate. The records of their experiences are interesting and valuable, but they are only hearsay evidence. Such evidence is a guide and a necessary guide to us in our observations, but it can never take the place of seeing for ourselves. Each of us has had his own experience at the Communion. It may not have been at all thrilling : our emotions may have been low in tone, but they are none the less valuable as guides to observation : perhaps they are all the more valuable because they have not overwhelmed our reasoning powers as violent emotions might have done. But low-toned emotions demand close attention, and we need to train our faculties so as to be able to discern them and to follow them up to their source. I therefore ask you to recall, gradually though it may have to be, what you have yourself felt, so as to lay hold on your own experience and discover which points in the service affect you. If you keep on the look-out for these whenever you come again, you will notice them more easily and it will require less effort to distinguish them. As attention to them becomes habitual, they will become clearer and more significant ; other things will come into relation

with them, and the area of understanding will be steadily extended.

I will try to speak of certain things which have appealed to me, and probably to a great many others. It is only fair, however, to remark that these can only be a selection, and consequently any person who reads this may have found reality at quite different points. However, these may at least serve as samples. In the first place, then, let us recollect what we are accustomed to feel when we come into church before the Communion, a certain stillness, deeper and more positive than any mere absence of noise, a stillness that can be felt, a stillness, observe, which is deeper and more marked in churches in which people pray continually. It reminds us of the stillness of a star remaining steadily in its place because of its unthinkably swift motion, and shining with a light which never falters because it is so intense; but it is more exactly to be compared to the stillness of a saint at prayer—his face is in perfect repose, his body is motionless, his mind is calm and his heart is steadfast, because life is flowing through him in so full a stream that nothing can disturb it or divert it from its goal.

You know how you feel it, and, probably, how you feel it grow deeper as the service goes on. That feeling is the impression made on you by the Peace of God. This is your way of feeling the Peace of God, the manner in which you become aware of it. If you are inclined to covet something more startling, remember the experience of Elijah—the earthquake, the lightning, the tempest—these were striking and tremendous, but the Lord was not in them—then came "a sound of gentle stillness," "and in that stillness onward came the Lord."

Next, I ask you to consider a fact which is so familiar to us that we never even begin to think out its implications, viz., that our churches are, wherever possible, built to face the East, so that at the Communion service priest and people look eastward. Recollect that this is not merely an inherited custom, but one of those small but decisive breaches with the past, like the substitution of Sunday for Saturday as the weekly holy-day, which cause great irritation, and are only carried through with difficulty. The Jewish Temple, and its forbear, the Egyptian, faced West. The Christians turned the church round and

made it face East. The West was, to the Egyptian, the place of the dead—an idea which was revived during the war in the popular phrase "gone West." The way to God for the Egyptian was through death, so he faced death in order to get past it, and when the hope and implications of immortality arose in Israel they found the old symbolism still embodied in the arrangement of the Temple. But the Church turned to the place of the dawn, symbolic of the fact that the light of the presence of God had broken out in this present life, and there was no need to wait for death before beholding it: besides a new day was breaking and the followers of Christ rejoiced in its freshness. So this disposition of our churches, which so often causes us to notice the morning light meeting our eyes at our Communions, ought to remind us that ours is the Religion of the Dawn—"the Day-spring." As watchers for the dawn we are well content to look for something which is faint and hard to perceive since we know it to be the earnest of the full brightness of day.

Meanwhile, what closes the vista of our physical sight? If a stranger to our religion were to come in, he might well ask, "Why

are these people and their priest facing a blank wall?" On account of the ideas of which we have just been speaking, we feel the desirability of having a window at the East end of the church, and yet we tend to place it high up, so that our line of vision is brought to a stop just behind the altar. This check which is put upon our sight, this obtrusive setting of a veil before our eyes should be a reminder that we have to look through the veil of this outward world and behold something which lies beyond. What lies beyond is suggested in two ways, viz., by the building and by the service. The building is to suggest the spiritual temple, which is built up of human beings, instead of pieces of stone and wood, or, to use another figure, that organism, the units or cells of which are men and women, which we call the Body of Christ. The service itself, and all its arrangements are meant to lead our thoughts up to that great service which St. John[1] saw when he was lifted up in spirit to behold a more permanent life on a higher plane, the service which centres round the altar-throne on which is our Lord, "The Lamb as it had been slain," surrounded by the

[1] Rev., IV.

four and twenty elders, the representatives of God's people, and the four "beasts" or living creatures, representative of every form of life. Around these again are not only those whom these represent, but also myriads upon myriads of angels. It is this great service in the spiritual world which gives force and validity to our services on earth. We need to bear this in mind in order to appreciate the tremendous content imparted to our sketchy earthly services by the great reality which lies behind them. Indeed we need to remember that the Elements themselves, as well as all the words and acts of our service, are veils to be penetrated and signs pointing in directions which ought to be followed by our spiritual gaze.

II

SOME NAMES FOR THE SACRAMENT

IT has often been remarked that there is no title for the Sacrament which embraces all its aspects. Yet each of the names which are given to it has its peculiar value because it indicates some particular tract of Christian experience. Hence they are all useful to us as clues by which to disentangle our impressions and extend our activities. I propose to consider two of them along lines which I have found to be of practical importance.

First, then, there is the very familiar name, "the Holy Communion," or, simply, "the Communion." This word is usually explained as meaning "sharing," but I feel that this will not bear examination. Substitute the one for the other, and you get "the Holy Sharing,"

which is a painful, if not grotesque expression. I go, of course, expecting to get my share of the blessing, but that ought not to be my chief consideration; otherwise, my religion degenerates into self-seeking. My needs are great and pressing, but the Christian method of obtaining satisfaction for them is to attend to the needs of others. The phrase, "My Communion," if used in the sense of "my share of the Divine Gift," is most dangerous. Besides, use it how you will, "sharing" suggests division and separation. We must learn to use the word Communion in its wider sense of Fellowship; a meaning which seems to be always present in the New Testament use of the word. But we have to be careful even of this word and avoid the tendency to abstraction. We are not dealing with abstractions but with concrete facts. So we must beware of treating "Communion" as an abstract noun. It does not here mean Friendliness; it is the name of a corporation, a society, The Fellowship, i.e., the Fellows grouped into a common life. To emphasize this a little more —the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost is not His association with me, but a great company of fellows, who are made fellows one with

another and joined together into an association by Him.

The Holy Communion, then, is the Holy Fellowship. Each Communion is a meeting of the Fellowship, and we learn the meaning and reality of Fellowship at these meetings. We shall realize how true this is if we compare the occasions when we have gone to Communion in a strange place with the occasions on which we have been amongst familiar company. We are conscious of a lack in the former case and of an expansion in the latter. Here is a piece of your own personal experience to which I commend your attention. For we have more clearly perceived the Fellowship, and have been more directly affected by it, in the second case than in the first. Seeing then that circumstances make such a difference, we must not be dependent on them, but must determine them. We have to help to make the Fellowship. Whenever we are tempted to stay away, we must remember that it will be diminished in size and power by our absence. Whenever we join in it we must remember that we are there for the building up of the Fellowship. Therefore no one must try to shut himself in with God and ignore his

fellows. In the interval before the service we must think of those who are in church with us, so that we may walk in company with them at every step which is taken. Furthermore, this meeting is an assembly of those who are fellows in spirit, and form part of the great Fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Consequently we must look at them on their spiritual side, remembering whatever affection, whatever devotion, whatever love of truth, whatever gracefulness of speech or action they may possess. We must learn to regard them on this their most favourable side. By thus learning to regard those about us as spirits we awaken our own spiritual nature and are enabled to make a great advance both in discernment and usefulness. But we must not set a limit to our progress or to our effectiveness by confining our thoughts to these persons alone. Therefore before each Communion we need to settle upon some others whom we will take with us in spirit. The Sacrament of the Communion is the Sacrament of the Fellowship, and in order to have fellowship with others we must get them there. Each of us has his own special contribution to make, for love is the divine cord by which men are drawn

to the Lord and each of us has special power in love over some friends. At the very beginning of our prayers, then, we ought to think of them as being present with us, and keep returning to the thought of them afterwards. If they are persons who are inclined to use the Sacrament, we are enabling their spirits to get into touch with it. If they are persons who do not feel the appeal of the Sacrament, it is a wiser policy to begin with this attempt to draw their spirits to it, than with the attempt to bring their bodies there, or even to draw the attention of their minds to it. In both cases we are not only gaining comfort for ourselves, but we are giving them real help by bringing them into contact with the concentrated and powerful life of the Fellowship. That in itself is important, but we seek to do something greater for them. We want to lead them with us to Christ. In order to do that, we must not only take them by the hand, but we must ourselves approach and reach Christ. Where is He to be found? "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them." Thus in gathering them together we are securing the conditions under which He

will manifest Himself. So, instead of thinking "How can we get to Christ?" we think of getting others together for Christ; we let slip our own lives, our own present needs and future hopes, with the result that we fulfil and verify Christ's own law, "He that loseth his life for My sake, shall find it." We acquire greater purposes and greater energies.

Now let us consider some of the implications of another title, "the Lord's Supper." In the New Testament the phrase is not used of the Sacrament itself, but of the Love-feast (Agape) which preceded it in those early days. Nevertheless it has been a wise instinct which has caused it to be applied to the Sacrament, for it is the family meal of the Fellowship, the fraternal banquet of the Church. This way of looking at it is repugnant to that common prejudice of our times which regards talking as spiritual, and eating and drinking as unspiritual. But look at the facts of life, and especially of family life. People who meet together to talk usually argue, if they do not squabble; people who meet together to eat are inclined to be friendly. Members of the older English Universities know what an important influence upon their social life the

dinner in Hall exerts. That shadowy, ritual meal which we are given when we pay a call marks how naturally the social instinct expresses itself in the sharing of food and drink. The family life may be more truly said to find its focus at the meal-table than even at the fireside. When a member of a family will not come in for meals, we know that he is getting out of touch and will soon break away. Men may repeat what opinions they will, but it remains true that they feel that the act of eating and drinking together not only symbolises, but deepens, unity. Still further, it is significant that when we wish to do signal honour to a person, we gather together a large number of people to eat with him. I must say that I feel more sure than ever of the Divinity of our Lord when I consider how exactly His religion fits, and indeed embodies so primitive and persistent a characteristic of human nature. I see the same mind revealing itself in the shaping of humanity as in the shaping of the rite in which He makes us friends of one another and of Him.

This thought of the Communion as the family meal obviously might become the means of bringing our Communions into line with the

general tenour of our lives, so that our religion would cease to be a thing apart from our domestic habits. After all, the partaking of the Holy Meal is far more akin to the customs of home than singing together or listening to lectures together, and consequently it is easier to revive in the home the thoughts which arose during the Sacrament than those which came to us at other services. As for the Sacrament itself: on the one hand, as has been well said, "We shall never understand the Sacrament of the Communion until we have realised that every meal is a sacrament"; while on the other hand, it would help greatly towards making our attendance at the Sacrament regular and frequent if we applied to it the social considerations which arise out of our meals at home. Perhaps I may be pardoned if I re-state one of these in order to show how this would work out. We do not begin to speculate half-an-hour before—still less the night before—whether we shall feel hungry enough or sociable enough to justify our appearing at the family board. We just go instinctively to take our place in the family circle, because the family bond draws us. To stay away would be to slight all the others.

Even when our absence is unavoidable, it lessens the happiness of the others and impoverishes their intercourse. These reflections may be transferred to our Communions, simply and logically. Every time we stay away we diminish the richness of the life of the family of God. We are letting other people down and diminishing their pleasure and comfort. Let not anyone think that he is too unimportant to make a difference: he is one the more or one the less, and the sum of the family affection is increased or diminished accordingly.

This reference of our conduct at Communion to the standard of family life will solve a difficulty which often presses heavily. Some of us are hindered in coming to the Communion by an irritability which makes it hard for us to get into the right frame of mind, let alone maintain it. After all, we might remember that we have had practice in conquering this temper at our table at home, and have learnt how amiability returns as we go on sharing meals. The remedy, therefore, is to make our attendance more regular and to handle ourselves as we do at home. We thus come to combine the ideas of the two tables

in an intimate union, for the meeting around the family board is our chief opportunity for rehearsing those virtues which are chiefly required in those who come to God's board, while the Table of the Lord hallows and exalts the affections of home. I have spoken already of pausing before the service to surround ourselves with the spirits of those whom we bring in our hearts: surely, whoever else we bring, we must make a place for those who are bound to us by the closest and holiest of all the ties of love, collecting around us those with whom we continually share the Father's gifts of food for body, mind and spirit at the domestic gathering. Love is the way into the Fellowship, and those whom we love form our easiest door into that upper chamber where we meet to feast with Christ, as He sits surrounded by His friends.

III

PREPARING OUR MINDS

THE service begins with the Lord's Prayer, but in contrast with our usual practice, this is said by the officiant alone, the people not saying it or even responding with an Amen. It marks the fact that we begin to pray, not as a company, but as so many persons who have just assembled together. This "Our Father," with the prayer for purity which follows it, is a surviving fragment of the priest's private preparation in the old form, and the idea seems to be that each person should at this point complete the preparation of himself which he makes before coming to church, or at least bring to mind the results of his self-examination and give expression to them at the opening of the Communion. Each of us is thus reminded

that he is not fit to rejoin the Fellowship until he has tried to dissociate himself from all that makes fellowship difficult—all sin, in fact. Thus, though it is not strictly a part of the service, it is necessary at this point to say something about our private and personal preparation. I often hear people complain—and my own experience bears them out—that however carefully they try to examine themselves, they never feel that they have done it thoroughly or obtained a just and complete estimate of their sinfulness. Indeed I notice that the most devout and regular communicants feel this most keenly. We do our best, and only seem to fail the more dismally. We feel that we ought to be more distressed by our sins, or we suspect the existence of undetected sin, we fear that our ideals must be low and that we may be blind to possibilities of higher life which we ought to see plainly. We tend to become slack because of this dissatisfaction, when it is really what we ought to expect and even hope for. It is the one thing needed. Nothing but a sense of imperfection can open the way for an advance. If we knew ourselves better and studied more carefully God's subtle penetration of our

minds, we should recognise that what is disturbing us is a real penitence. Our distress is a sign that we are dimly aware that our spirits are being urged to move to a higher level. The feeling that we are not so penitent as we ought to be, arises from the contrast between our inner selves and God Who is beginning to permeate them. We are confused and disturbed because the contrast is badly realised, but this condition is necessary to our being aroused to labour for progress. As our Lord's influence and presence make themselves more evident and we pay more attention to them, the discomfort will increase until it grows unbearable. When it comes to that, we shall perceive unmistakably what is detaining us, and be eager and desperate to wrench ourselves away from it.

Moreover, we need to ponder the fact that the tale of sin is not just a list of deeds done. It is the width of the gap between what we are and what we ought to be. We cannot gauge it till we have almost crossed to the other side. We are in the same position as when we look across the sea to some island: we cannot conjecture the distance: if we are told how great it is, we cannot realise it.

One of the advantages of beginning the service with the Lord's Prayer is that, by taking the very words of our Lord on our lips, and adapting our minds to them, we are put into the way of thinking His thoughts. The more I try to do so, the more conscious do I become that my character trails far, far behind the thoughts which these words express. "As we forgive them that trespass against us"—the phrase stings like a lash on the cheek. Painful as this may be, it makes us realise that the test which really shows up the character of sin is holiness, the holiness of Christ. That holiness cannot be thought of as something separable from Christ, a sort of quality or force which can be detached from Him and passed on to others; it is part of Himself or, rather, it is Christ affecting us in a particular way. We cannot realise what sin is, till He comes into us: we feel it and repel it only by means of Him. A great thinker[1] has pointed out that Christ is the only man there has ever been who was capable of feeling sin as it ought to be felt, because He never came down to its level. We have sinned, and sinned because we liked it; we still have some inclination

[1] Moberly

towards it; it still has a fascination for us, even if it is a horrible fascination. But His mind impinges on ours, and stirs us from our easy acquiescence. He comes into so close a relation to us that He understands and accentuates our hunger, and directs it towards its satisfaction, as we could not do for ourselves, just as the brain defines the sensations of our bodily organs and guides their actions. This effect of Christ upon us is so marked a feature of our spiritual life and so exactly like the action and reaction between the human body and the brain, that the combination of our souls with Him has acquired the name of the Body of Christ, the Body of which He is the head or brain. This combination is a permanent fact which we ought to notice and study. So long as we are only learning to fit into it, we are ill-adjusted to it, which is a further reason why our first perception of it should arouse a sense of discomfort. We need to seek the cause of our disturbance and not to regard it as self-caused. Though the process is painful, it enables us to discover and explore that vital connection between ourselves and the Head which forms a leading factor in the life of that combination

which, as we have said, is called the Body. It thus appears, once more, that this distressing dissatisfaction is a valuable product of our self-examination in preparation for Communion.

I do not wish to disparage the excellent lists of questions for self-examination which have been drawn up, but I do not think that the incessant use of them is a real help to the frequent communicant. We are not likely to detect new or unnoticed sins except by slow degrees and at long intervals. Our sins are persistent and uniform. We know all too well what to look for in that kind. So, while it would be unwise to forget the existence of the indistinct margin which lies all around our consciousness, our attention ought to be kept steadily on what we see by the light of God. This, for the time being, marks out our special portion of the task of conquering sin. My personal duty is to deal with the particular sin which I am at present encountering in myself. But this sin is not peculiar to me: it is one of the world's sins; it is a sin shared by many others; of all the difficulties of men it is the difficulty which I best understand, and am therefore best qualified to deal with. All the forces which have humanity for their field

converge in me. I am the meeting-place of the combination formed by virtue and the combination formed by vice—or, to call them by technical names, the Body of Christ and the body of sin. The more the purifying stream of Christ's life which He pours through all His associates comes to a head in me, the more it penetrates and loosens the opposing structure, formed by laxity and malignity, which pens men into wrong habits. The more the health of God cures my spiritual disease, the more I become a channel of health to my fellow-members of the new humanity, re-formed by Christ, as well as of the old. These considerations help one to understand why the subsidence of sin is so slow. If I limit my view to myself, the result of my efforts seems puzzlingly small. When I remember that other lives are involved, I realise why it must be so. The disease in others reacts on me; the poison in them flows back on me; but as I go on serving as a vessel in which Christ can destroy it, there is less of it in the whole system. Though my task is therefore greater, my function is greater: the thought takes away the numbing sense of pettiness, and gives back to my efforts that dignity without

which it is difficult to take them seriously. I am aware that in saying this I am tacitly criticising a popular belief as to the proper field and method for the battle with sin. But, after all, sin can only be destroyed in its own place—within the heart—and therefore my chief and perhaps my only opportunity of dealing directly with it is in myself. Since, however, our lives are united, and not separated by impassable gulfs, when I destroy sin in myself, I destroy it for others : a certain portion of the virus of sin has been got rid of, and there is a lessened amount of it left running through society. I do not put this theory forward simply because I have been impressed by the need of some explanation for the baffling slowness with which sin is diminished, but because I perceive more and more clearly how closely our spirits are knit together. Without any change in my outward demeanour, without any verbal appeal, a change of heart in myself invariably produces a change of heart in those about me. This is a fact which anyone can ascertain for himself; and it justifies and more than justifies the attitude which I have learnt to take and the hope which increasingly sustains me.

As I have said already, sin does not consist in certain forbidden acts, but in a state of moral depression, or rather opposition. The standard and test by which we are to judge ourselves is not a set of rules but our Lord Himself. The lists which have been mentioned have their use in reminding us of points in His character which we are apt to forget: but we must not treat His character as though it were something which could be detached from Himself, it is part of Him and we can only get at it by going to Him. Whether we use a list or not, we must look at Him to discover our true state. Consequently, the best preparation for Communion is Communion; for Communion must rise to some kind of conscious contact with Christ, or else it is not true Communion, real association with Him. Every time you make your Communion you are brought up against Him and so are judged: you receive Him and so are fitted to come again. I do not say that you come away with some sentence stamped on your brain, telling you exactly what you are to do and be. Still less do I say that you may expect to gain every time a clearer perception of what you are to become. The brain is but

a slow follower of the heart, and finds it hard to apprehend the new feelings of the spirit as it reaches an unfamiliar tract of life. Often indeed you can find no words just because He has stirred the depths of your being far below the springs of speech and action, so that the mind can perceive but little except a feeble stirring which hints that the waters are being moved by a deeper and purer spring. Set a high value on this, it is the deepest and surest contrition.

It follows naturally from these considerations that the closer our Communions are to one another the better. The shorter the interval, the less time there has been for loss and forgetfulness. The more frequent the occasions, the more opportunity He has of making our hearts meet for Himself. Let us look at this question of frequency from another side, using the analogy of the family meal. If we had got out of touch with our family and fallen below its standards, the obvious remedy would be to get amongst them again and share their gatherings continually. Every time we gather around the Lord's Table we are associating with the family of God, and with Him Who makes it a family. We naturally

and almost unconsciously adjust ourselves to the Spirit of the family and of its Head. We cannot quite express in words how we do this, because a right social attitude is determined by instincts, and, moreover, instincts of a delicate and complicated character. Still, we are in the right position for the development of these instincts, since we are placing our spirits, the source of our instincts, in contact with the spiritual household. Indeed this is the only way in which we can obtain and secure the subtle and indescribable changes which enable us to fit into a society. As we look back over our own past, we see for ourselves how we have been adjusted to the lives of other people and drawn out to meet their capacities simply by associating with them. If we look at our experience at the Communion, we shall find that the same process has been carried on there. The Holy Family, little by little, has taken a marked effect upon us. We have felt more and more at home amongst them, so that taking our place in the household of God has become quite natural to us.

Very few communicants are in the habit of scrutinising their motives for continuing their attendance at the ordinance. When they

consider the subject at all they are apt to confine their thoughts to the theoretical and traditional reasons which induced them to become communicants, as though experience had neither confirmed nor supplemented them. Even when reading and discussion have given their thoughts a wider range, people fancy that participation in the Sacrament is simply a duty deduced from certain arguments which, in turn, are based on the Scriptures and the consensus of Christian opinion. At every stage of this, everything depends on certain postulates, and, as has been justly remarked, a postulate is the begging of some question. Postulates must be justified by experience or dropped. Now every communicant has had his own experience and ought to drag it into the light and see what bearing it has upon his assumptions. The knowledge is there, and my anxiety is that persons should ascertain it so that they may not be disturbed by those who halt for ever on the threshold, raising difficulties instead of making experiments, and trying to determine the nature of spiritual things without ever examining them. I am of opinion that many, if not most communicants, if they thoroughly analysed their experience and their

position, would discover that this family feeling of which I have spoken is the cause which not only brought them to their Communion but keeps them at it. They felt that there was a corporate life underlying the outer rite; they were moved by a desire to enter that inner life, and they have actually come to share in it. But no family life is realised or appreciated unless it is thought about and appraised. This is especially true of the family life which actualises itself around the altar, because, both at its original institution and during its subsequent history, the outward action of the service is made as slight as possible in order that it may not overshadow the spiritualities. Look at it in your recollection, look at it in church, look at it for a few moments after each Communion, and you will begin to realise that you, as a spirit, have been associating with the redeemed and the Redeemer in a spiritual world.

Even if you cannot get as far as this at first, you will find that your fundamental motive is a feeling that there is "*something in it.*" That feeling of value is a true form of perception; it is not an emotion which has its origin in yourself, but an impression produced on you

by something which you have encountered. If you look at it steadily you will find that it reveals that of which I have been speaking and more besides. For on considering what you have felt you will come to alter your phrase to "*Someone in it*," "Someone Who has a meaning for me." I am not going to make any attempt to describe that feeling, because the manner of perception is bound to vary so greatly from individual to individual that any endeavour of another person to indicate its nature might be quite misleading. But this feeling constitutes your personal perception of our Lord, and therefore the point from which you must start. In the vast majority of cases it must be a slight sensation at first; sensibility, like all other things is weak in its beginnings. We are apt to think that because He is great, He is bound to make a tremendous impression on us, forgetting that the extent of the impression is limited to the measure of our sensitiveness. However, some degree of sensitiveness—or, to use a shorter word, life—is there, and some impression has been made. I am quite sure that this is true of most people, and that the cause of much of our distress is our failure to see properly, aggravated by a

hazy feeling that we are neither fit to see nor to be seen there. Vaguely-felt possibilities only arouse a vague dissatisfaction, which is all the more troublesome because it is vague. Compare our thoughts about Him Whom we seek in this service with that indefinable and disquieting feeling which we have when we meet someone who lives on the heights. We recognise that there is a strange significance about him, but its exact nature eludes our grasp, and we feel exasperated by our own impotence. This comparison will help us to valuate our feelings when we come to Communion, and will help us to understand that they are due to contact with a Person, and not merely to a failure to satisfy our own conception of what we ought to be.

IV

UP THE MOUNT OF VISION

AT the beginning of the meeting at God's Board, we complete our two-fold preparation. By the help of God we break away from our personal sins, so that there may be no barrier between us and those whom we meet. Remembering that there are no distances of miles or leagues in the world of the heart, we try to bring those whom we love and those for whom we pray clearly before our minds in order to feel that they are near us and to keep them beside us. Experience has made me attach great importance to this, for I can feel our Lord's presence most clearly when I am presenting others to Him. I find it far harder to perceive Him when I am seeking Him for myself or by myself.

We now take a step forward. We look directly towards Him to Whom we are to pray. The next part of the service, consisting of the Collect, Epistle, Gospel and Creed, is all designed to set our eyes on God, and God before our eyes. In order to make it the easier, we all take the same point of view, and that a point of view shared and chosen by the whole Church, for these same collects, epistles and gospels and this same creed have been in use for many generations and are now used in the majority of Christian countries wherever there is a fixed liturgy. The Epistle and Gospel are always chosen so that they lie along the same line of vision as the Collect, which, of course, expresses the leading idea of the particular day. In the Collect we speak directly to God, which is an obvious way of turning our attention to Him. In so doing we look at a particular aspect of Him which is carefully stated in the opening words of the collect, as well as implied in the petition. In order to make this action more perfect, it is as well for each person to speak, not simply for himself, but as the mouthpiece of his little group in particular and of the church in general. By doing this he stimulates in others

a tendency to turn in the same direction. In the Epistle we listen to the words of men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, in order to catch the tones of God's voice, to perceive God speaking through His apostle. Even when we are not making any deliberate attempt to discern how these words can form a path along which God comes to us, we may be made conscious that they do. For, often, while most of the words slide over the brain without making any impression, some phrase or sentence stands out vividly and makes an intimate personal appeal quite apart from its context. That particular point in the Epistle ought to be noted and remembered, for it is the point at which God has succeeded in getting into touch with your mind. It may not be a startling experience, but it is of great importance to you, both because of the illumination it casts on your life and because it gives a peculiarly strong apprehension of God's direct and specific interest in yourself. If you can remember to do so, be on the look out for this occurring; when it does occur, it is wise to let the subsequent words go unheeded and to maintain the contact which has been made, by dwelling on the vital phrase. If this be

done, even for a few moments, it forms a very real Meditation, with the proper outcome of a meditation, the realisation of God.

In the Gospel we hear the words of our Lord, the Christ Whom we wish to reach : so, in the same way, we need to watch for the Divine Mind behind the words and the figure of the Divine Person in the story. Here again, if any fragment of the narrative makes itself felt more keenly than the rest, and takes on a directly personal meaning, it is to be given the chief place in our thoughts.

So far, as has been pointed out, we have been looking at some one facet of the Divine life. Since this has, necessarily, been a partial view, it needs to be put into its proper relation to the whole. So we next recite the summary of faith, the Creed, in order to take as clear and broad a view of God as possible. I wish to attract attention to this use of the Creed, which is especially valuable in these days when one-sided and haphazard views of God are not uncommon. The instincts of the Church are often far deeper than the instructions which she has issued. She has put into action truths which she has never formulated, and been moved to the use of practices

which have justifications and results never yet scrutinised. Think over the reasons which are alleged for our practice in this particular matter, and you will find that they appear trivial and even irrelevant when compared with the impression which is produced on us, and the opening of the mind produced in us, whenever we join heartily in the saying of the Creed. We are certainly doing something more than refreshing our memories. We have just been endeavouring to catch sight of God, why should we make a break and emphasize it by changing the position of our bodies, why should we all stand and turn so that all face the one way, just to say a little lesson to ourselves? After all, these words describe the very God Whom we are trying to discern. While the words of the service lead us still upwards, are we to lower our eyes? Purblind though we are, our gaze has been caught by some scintillation of the Divine glory: surely the thoughts of the Creed ought to help us to keep our eyes on Him, to scan His lineaments, to penetrate into His Being. It is as when a man, who has been travelling through the night up narrow, ascending defiles, comes in sight of a great landscape under the veils of

dawn. It is a wonder of colour and distance, of lights and shadows, clear to a glance, but confusing on a closer survey. If now someone who knows the country points out the great features of the scene, our traveller sees it all the more distinctly and understands what he sees. As each feature is named, it changes from vagueness to definition before his eyes; the dark fold becomes a forest, the brown blur takes the shape of a castle, and the dull grey bar flashes into a rushing river. Just in the same way the Creed helps our vision by putting before us a precise and comprehensive statement of what the church sees as it looks upwards, and what it has so seen and stated for a millenium and a half—God revealed through Him Who is the same yesterday, to-day and forever.

Perhaps I may be allowed to work out this use of the Creed in some detail. It is, I think, unfortunate that "I believe" has been substituted for the original "We believe," which would have emphasised the corporate nature of this effort to lay hold on God. But, taking it as it stands, notice that we do not say, "I believe that there is a God" or even, "I believe that there is one God." From "be-

lief that " to " belief in " is a long step. The former is a bare assent, but the latter amounts to an action—entrusting oneself to Him. That " in " expresses a movement, (in the Greek idiom it is " into," and perhaps " on " is the nearest word in our idiom). If you believe in a man, you go to him when you are in a difficulty, or you want to have flagging energies revived, or even when you simply feel the need of companionship. So the words may be fitly used to express and facilitate a movement of mind and spirit towards God.

We then make an effort to apprehend God as the Father, but we make it briefly. There is little to say, for we can comprehend but little. We just stir up the instinct of sonship in ourselves so as to direct our nature towards Him. However, we can get a somewhat clearer perception of Him by thinking of the manifestation of His power, so we spend a moment in regarding Him as Maker of all things visible and invisible, of all the worlds and all the heavens.

Then we come to the Second Person. We can grasp a good deal more about Him, so a more detailed suggestion is made. Point after point is indicated so that we may discern

the outflow of the Godhead in Him (e.g. God *out of* God, i.e. coming out of the depths of the Divine Being), after which we proceed to define the Human Figure to our eyes. The various incidents which are named bring out various sides of His character; we do not pass from one scene of His history to another, but watch the building up of His perfected and potent human nature. Even the clause near the end, "from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead" brings out a constant trait of His character, for not only did He continually teach that He would come to judge, but His very presence judged men, rebuking the evil and encouraging the good, and still has the same effect on us. Whenever He comes, i.e. whenever He makes Himself more clearly felt either in our hearts or in the play of circumstance this effect is all the more marked.

We now come to the difficult subject of the Holy Spirit, Who so knits Himself up with ourselves and so completely identifies Himself with our whole nature that unless we look closely we cannot distinguish Him from our better selves. This same word Spirit is used for the higher principles of our own nature,

the nobler life in us which is more clearly derived from God, and we cannot draw a boundary between the spring and its source. Yet the Divine character emerges more clearly in the uprise of noble impulses within us. Sometimes, indeed, these are so superior to our own character as to be almost alien to us, and though we are completely identified with them, we are aware that we are possessed by Another. We may make this clear to ourselves by thinking of a word which is constantly used of God's action and power, namely Grace. For these impulses make us gracious, they issue in graceful actions, they lend grace to our demeanour because they embody the love and beauty of God. Again, we are conscious that they are divine, for not only do they lift us to a height of love and devotion which our humanity could not attain, or perhaps conceive, but they come with a force and a steady flow of power which betray the nature of God Himself. Since Holy is a more emphatic word for Divine, and also implies "making divine," this title, the Holy Spirit (or Ghost which is an older term for Spirit) draws our attention to the sphere in which we perceive Him most clearly, i.e. in the movements of our own

spirits, and that at a moment when we are probably beginning to feel the elation which results on our setting our hearts on God so that we are lifted up to Him by a power which acts upon the inmost recesses of our being. What we experience at this moment needs, furthermore, to be supplemented by the thought of the Spirit as the Giver of Life and consequently as being felt and expressed in all our vital functions, down to the movements of brain and body. This leads me to consider the list of His activities which, as in the case of the Father, enables us to trace Him in the field of His working. First-mentioned and readiest to hand are the Holy Catholic Church and the Communion of Saints. These really are two sides of the same association of people, in whom we feel Him on a more extended scale than is possible in any individual life. "Saints," of course, includes all in whom and on whom God is acting. As we remember and realise that they surround us, we are not only encouraged to let loose our own enthusiasm, but are conscious of an inflow of divine power from them, i.e. we not only feel the urge of the Spirit in ourselves, but also upon ourselves from without. We cannot

sufficiently impress on our minds that divine power is not a mere force, blind and unconscious, but is sentient and purposeful, which is to say personal; in short the Holy Spirit. We can learn a good deal by observing the effect upon ourselves of that part of the Church and Communion with which we are obviously in contact—the group of persons who are physically present with us from time to time. For the degree of holiness i.e. of the active presence of the Holy Spirit, varies palpably. With some congregations we feel God streaming through them so that we are uplifted and ought to realise that this is because the Life is being allowed full play. With others, again, we are but little helped and are scarcely able to develop any energy. The movement of the Spirit is being checked in its passage: His movement is hampered by the sluggishness of that part of the Christian Organism, the Body of Christ. This difference of feeling is not due to the exhilaration of large numbers and the depression of small, for the uplift is often greater in the small congregation than in the large.

The most penetrating and comprehensive statement about the Holy Spirit that I know

outside the New Testament and the Creeds is that He is the Love of God. In saying this Aquinas means the love which proceeds from God, though, of course, that emerges in us as love to God and man. This definition, summarising much study and experience, is of great use in our efforts to discover the Spirit for ourselves and to discern Him more extensively. For, looking into ourselves, we see that love has the peculiarity of being ourselves and not ourselves, produced by ourselves and yet given to us—a youth will tell you in the same breath that he loves his maiden of his own free choice and that he cannot help loving her; he is at once proud of his love and humbled by it. Love rises up within us from a hidden and unfathomable fount. It destroys our selfishness and makes us embrace self-sacrifice: it enables us to lose ourselves so that we find ourselves; in short it substitutes the character of God as revealed in Christ for our own without destroying our personality, for we are more ourselves than ever. Without any destruction of self, it enables us to get outside ourselves and extend, as it were, into the inmost lives of others, while we feel their love within ourselves. This is progressively

discerned as we learn to be aware of the presence of that Incorporation of people, which is called the Holy Catholic Church and the Communion of Saints, assembled around us as we worship. The tie between them and us is not the possession of similar opinions, but the community of affection. That is why we get most easily into touch with that great assembly by surrounding ourselves with those whom we love most, for they call out our own love and serve as a link to these others who are filled with love. All the members of that Communion, from the great champions of God down to our most imperfect friends, and even ourselves, are styled Saints i.e. holy persons, persons in whom dwells God Who is love, and we can take the suggestion which is implied in that name and observe the truth to which it draws our attention. As we survey the life of love over this larger field and feel it more strongly in ourselves, we become more and more conscious of its divine nature, so that dropping that word "it" and breaking away from the misleading analogy of a physical force we recognise and hail Him as the Holy Spirit.

"I look for the Resurrection of the Dead." Here again I regret the change from We to

I, but still it serves the purpose of driving each individual to regard his own call and duty. We are still exploring and envisaging the activity of the Spirit as the Giver of Life and now come to consider those who have passed through death to a higher life. The force of the original word is, of course, await or expect; nevertheless we may be thankful for that "look for" which encourages us to look for it here and now. Like so much which we are taught to expect, this is not something which is to begin at some future date. Our hopes are laid up in heaven, and are to be seen whenever we penetrate to it, whenever in fact we reach Christ, Who is at its centre. Indeed as life goes on we base our faith more and more on what we have so seen. If we will look around us when we draw near to Him, if we will learn to train and trust our hearts, as we have trained and trust our sight for physical things, we shall feel that our dead are not entombed but are risen again and are very near to us. If we watch what comes to us in the service, we shall find it to be true that God will bring with Jesus them which sleep in Him.[1]

[1] II Thess., IV, 14.

"The life of the world to come." This "world to come" is not a world which is not yet formed. It is in existence already. It is thrusting itself up under the foundations of society. It is exerting a pressure on our inmost being, and, so far as we allow God to dispose our hearts, we express its life in our outward actions. It is the world into which we pass when we are at prayer. Our experience at prayer shows us that it is the world of causes, while the outer life, in which our bodies move, is the world of effects, for what we conceive and achieve in prayer becomes manifest in external results at a later stage. These experiences show us that it is the life to come, the life which is ahead of all physical life and determines its future. Furthermore, as we find that its effects become more and more evident, we see that it is bound to modify all lower life more and more till this latter shall be a manifestation of it and so be raised to its level. When this takes place, it will have come into view and come into force, and no longer be the world *to* come. It may also be remarked that "the life of the world to come" is the Resurrection Life, for as we learn to descry it we find that it has the Risen

Lord for its centre and ruler, and that it includes all those who are dead to this present world and alive in Him, dead to earth completely through physical death or dead to it through mortification of earthly desires. It is so necessary to remember that the word "life" is only a convenient way of referring to living beings, that life is a faculty, the highest form of which is only found in persons and can only be envisaged by thinking of such persons. However much our thinking may be aided by such remarks as "Love is the perfection of life" or "Life is a characteristic of God," we must continually return to the fact that it only exists as embodied in living beings. We shall never realise the truth of "our citizenship is in heaven" until we get rid of abstractions and set ourselves free to dwell on the only reality, actual persons. By doing so we unify our perceptions, for we see that the Life of the World to Come, the Kingdom of Heaven, The Communion of Saints and the Holy Catholic Church are the one life viewed from different standpoints and manifested in various ways.

So far we have considered the life of the world to come, as we perceive it in others; I wish now to suggest the consideration of a form in which we can perceive it in ourselves. "The life of the world to come" is eternal life, and that is a life which rises above time and underlies time, not a life which cannot begin till time is over. It is a life more solid and real than the life of time; it is not a matter of conjecture, but something of which we have experience, just as we know from experience that time is not so fixed and unchangeable as it would appear. We are aware that when time comes into contact with the spiritual life, it loses its rigid and dominating character. Time varies: it often masters us, but sometimes we master it. Sometimes it acts as a drag, sometimes we make it race along. It ceases to exist for us in our highest moments, for example when we are lifted up on the wings of art, or of affection, or of worship. Consciousness remains and is quite lucid. How completely we had passed into eternity can be judged by the shock when we relapse to the level where time has been going on. We wake with a start, but the awaking has been from a higher life to a lower. There

are certain occasions of this kind, not very frequent perhaps, which are important but are apt to be misunderstood. Personally I have noticed that they occur most often at the Communion. We suddenly recover consciousness of the celebrant's voice, and realise that a number of words, perhaps whole sentences, have escaped our notice. This has not been the result of physical sleep—the signs of that are easily recognised. Nor has it been due to a mere wandering of the attention, otherwise we could remember what we had been thinking about. There is just a blank in the memory. There is no sense of the passage of time: the moment which terminates it seems to join on to the moment before our translation to a higher life, for that is what it has truly been. Our time-consciousness has been suspended or overwhelmed, as in the cases already mentioned; but under these circumstances we have risen into that other world so completely that there is not simply a cessation of time, but an entry on another mode of life. We can take as a help in thinking it out, what St. Paul describes: how he was caught up into heaven, and heard things "which are not lawful to utter"—

which does not mean that he would have got into trouble if he had uttered them, but that he could not give utterance to them, because they could not be expressed by the laws, or system, under which this life is lived, the laws of thought and expression which determine our thinking in our usual state of life. His brain, evidently, had succeeded in retaining the impression of having been in contact with a life which it could not really grasp. We do not succeed in doing as much as this, but the very failure of the brain to comprehend shews that we have been living on a height transcending the life of this world. Such experiences have a great value as evidence. But for the practical work of the moment, it is more necessary to store in our minds those more conscious experiences of eternal life, which I have already paralleled by our experiences of art. We have, besides, to realise that we live in two worlds, the temporal and the eternal. The things of the spirit, love, beauty and goodness, are things of eternity, and they weave a web of eternal life through the more garish but less enduring web of time. The eternal presences around us, made tangible in prayer, the affection of our friends

and the love which glows in our own hearts—these are to be believed, these are to be accepted as the truth, rather than the physical life with its menace of death. Before leaving the subject I should like to expand this suggestion about belief. We do not express "belief *in*" these things but simply say that we believe them to be. This is, I suppose, because our reliance must be upon God Himself. But nevertheless, since God is more clearly manifested in the world to come than in this, we have to learn to rely on that rather than this, or at least we are bound by our belief about the world to come to treat it as a fact and a dominant fact, viewing it so deliberately and steadily in this our attempt to see God in it, that we shall not forget it, either in the mixed conditions of ordinary life, or even during our closer approach to our Lord in the further progress of the service. Indeed, we need to recollect the Fellowship who stand around us in eternal life. For though here and henceforward I am perceiving God in my own way, by the use of my own faculties, yet I am doing it in unison with others and in order to help others. I may be only the tip of the finger that feels the glow of the Divine glory raying

upon it, yet though that sense of touch is obscure it goes to help even those who are the very eyes of the Body. In return, my feeling is heightened and guided by their more direct perception, as is the sensitive finger of the body by the brain and eye.

I fear that my treatment of the Creed has been rather lengthy but I am anxious to suggest that we should cure ourselves of the habit of saying the Creed as though the mind were merely turning on itself, and study to make the saying of the Creed a movement of one's whole nature up to God. The recitation of our Belief ought not to be a religious parallel to the repetition of the multiplication table, but like a lover speaking of his beloved to his beloved. It will thus became a great step forward towards the more intimate union that is to be.

V

THE GREAT DEDICATION AND INTERCESSION

THE Offertory is a part of the Service which is but little regarded at present. Through an unfortunate error, many people think that the collection is the Offertory, though the taking of a collection is not obligatory, while there is always an Offertory. Even those who are better informed are inclined to regard the time of the Offertory as an interval during which the priest is getting the elements ready and the service is at a standstill. So they kneel down and say their private prayers. This ought not to be so, for it is a solemn, corporate act, the setting before our Lord of that which He is to make into the Sacrament, and, besides, since it is a dedication of the most typical kinds of food to the highest purpose, it is a dedication of all food, the con-

secration of, and thanksgiving for, every meal we eat. Again, since food and drink are absolute necessities of life, and all our use and enjoyment of other physical things depends on our having these, this act ought to be the dedication to God of all our physical possessions. Later in the service we are to present our bodies as part of the Sacrifice : here we present that upon which the bodily life depends.

In these days, when we have to rely on the organisation of a whole world for the supply of the barest necessities, it is well to remember sometimes how these simple articles of food represent the co-operative efforts of an entire civilisation, and can only be secured by the maintenance of peace and prosperity throughout a whole world. This not only increases our feeling of solidarity with all humanity, but serves as a prelude to the great intercession which is to follow, the Prayer for the Church, which we will now consider.

I have insisted on the necessity of having certain definite people in mind when we come to the Communion. This little circle of friends is to form our starting-point but not our limit. We have to add to the friends whom we would have brought in any case all those people

whose condition makes an appeal for our sympathy or support. As I shall try to point out in detail, this prayer has been so moulded that each person of whom we have decided to think, finds a suitable place provided in some class which is mentioned. Consequently, because he is associated with a whole class, our thoughts are led on towards including that whole class, which, again, is made more actual and interesting to us because we have a friend in it. Thus we find ourselves getting into touch with wider and wider circles, and we move on towards the ideal which is set before us, prayer for the whole church. The brief preface with which the prayer opens is a careful and impressive reminder that God has charged us to offer prayers and supplications for all men. But notice that we are also to give thanks for all men. It is true that in the earlier part of the prayer, the words are words of supplication. Yet, even then, those for whom we pray are not spoken of as merely necessitous. " The congregation here present " consists of people who respond to the appeal of things divine in some degree. Again, it is rather implied in speaking of the Church, the Rulers, the Clergy and the People that we are asking for

a continuance of powers which they already possess. Although these powers need to be increased, they have been imparted to them to some extent hitherto, and thus there is considerable ground for thankfulness. When we come to the mention of the departed the language is purely thankful. I think, then, that we may fairly conclude that supplication is meant to be accompanied by thanks, and thanks by supplication, throughout. We are to remember before God not only the poverty, the sins and the weakness of our friends, but their gifts, their goodness and their lovableness. I do not see why we should think that God is interested only in men's faults and defects. It seems to me that He must be far more interested in their virtues, since these are the effects which He has produced in them and intends to develop. We seem to have a lurking idea that men do not need the help of God to maintain their success—at all events we are inclined to pray as if we thought so.

Furthermore, when we have brought before God all the weakness and all the strength of a man we have presented the whole of his character, and it is only a step more—if indeed it is as much as a step more—to present the man as

a person. It is necessary to lay some stress on this, in order to get away from the idea that prayer consists in making statements and urging pleas. These have their place, but that place is given to them in order that from them we may proceed to the natural and effective mode of prayer which consists in bringing persons into contact with God. Experience has shown me that there is little profit to oneself and little advantage to others in going rapidly through lists of names, even under appropriate and suggestive headings, while the careful realisation of persons makes the service living to oneself and a source of life to others. The realisation of persons gives actuality to what we are doing. We pass from our own thoughts into a world of real persons. We begin, as we have said, with those whom we know, since they can most easily be actualised. Having caught hold of them, and raised ourselves into the spiritual world by their means, we can pass on to descry those who are linked to them by common needs and common hopes.

I wish to state at this point a theory which I have formed, not in order to harmonise preconceived ideas, but to give systematic form to my own experience. St. Paul pointed out

how the structure of the corporate Christian life can be elucidated by the study of the human body. The latter is built up of organs, each having its own character and function different from those of all the rest. All alike, however, are fed and cleansed by the one blood, and in order to be so fed and cleansed must continually allow the incoming blood to pass out and away to the other organs. If the blood cannot get out, it cannot get in: the flow of blood is stopped and mortification sets in. Now this is equally true of the spiritual life. No doubt there are great crises during which a man thinks solely of God and opens himself to receive the Divine power simply to overcome his defects and to burst his limitations: these cases seem to contradict the analogy, but they do not, for even then the tide of power will force a way out; the man must serve to others what he receives or else receive no more. But in the more normal and settled spiritual life the law obviously holds good. If you seek for power for yourself only, it does not flow into you. You have opened a way for the power to get in, but it cannot use it until there is a way for it to move onwards. To put it in another way: if I lay my hand on

Christ for my own sake, there is little or no sense of His power, but if I take hold of some man as well and draw him to Christ, a circuit is formed through which there is a sensible flow of His virtue. It is the old story, you must lose your own life, forget about it and think of others, if you are to find its volume increased by the stream of Divine life.

I am bound to say that this method of working has done much towards rescuing me from a temptation which has probably assailed others. I now see that I used to allow my frame of mind to be shaped by the superficial view that I was praying while those for whom I was praying were not. I seemed therefore, at least at the moment, to stand on a higher plane than theirs. But as I came to realise their presence this dangerous tendency was frustrated, for I met them on the level and was but one of them. I also came to feel that men may pray in spirit when their minds are otherwise occupied, at all events if someone else is stirring up their spirits. This has brought me the additional comfort of being helped to feel sympathetically towards men whose minds are alienated from religion, while their spirits are obviously inclined to it and even moved by it

—men whose conversation is anti-Christian but whose instincts are Christian. At the least I can better bear their hostile or cold remarks, when I have felt their spirits joining with mine in prayer. Furthermore, I have learnt to see that in prayer one is in a world which is quite real, but in which there is no separation between those who love one another. Affection can be kept alive in that world of the heart when external opportunity is entirely lacking. For example, after the lapse of years I met a man who had been living far away; we had not corresponded with one another, and we had been occupied by very different interests. But I had continually associated him with me in my prayers, and when we came together he was as though we had been together all the time. On the other hand, any coldness to our fellows makes a marked separation in that world and terminates our perception of the love of God. Experience of that spiritual world, then, teaches us to know how the love of God shows itself through men and women, and consequently we become more able to perceive this divine element in our fellows in the ordinary intercourse of earthly life.

We may now proceed to the consideration

of the prayer in some detail. I have already stated that every person and desire has a place provided for it in this prayer and should be thought of at its appropriate point. But I should have felt guilty of some impertinence in tracking this out point by point had I not found it so often overlooked. Perhaps the best method will be to give some indication of the scope of each clause. First of all we pray for the Church, asking that we may all agree in the truth, and all be in concord. The growing desire of our times for the unity of Christendom is given emphatic expression by being thus set at the very head of our petitions, and its position helps to make us feel that it is a fundamental necessity for the life and progress of the Church.

Then follows a prayer for the governments of the world, that they may be expressions of the Divine Government. All political and social objects find their place under this heading. This will be more evident to us if we consider the meaning of the words which are used. Justice is not merely the punishment of criminals; it is the ensurement of proper opportunities for all. Religion signifies a bond —the bond which unites man to his fellows as

well as to his God. In this particular place religion seems to refer to social relationships rather than to the holding of the Creed which belongs to an earlier clause in the prayer. Virtue, again, while implying the absence of vice, consists in the active service of others.

Having considered the influencing of the world by her ideals, we now concentrate our attention on the Church through which the power of God ought to flow, making her not only a pattern but a moral force. We naturally begin with the clergy, who represent her typically and who, besides, ought to be channels of God's influence in a special way—hence the stress laid upon their lives, the mention of which precedes that of their teaching (' doctrine '). Like all the other clauses, this ought to be actualised by the recollection of definite persons. To think especially of some clergyman or group of clergy whom we know, makes all the difference to our appreciation of the words, but it seems to me to do more. No doubt God knows the needs of men and the limitations of our knowledge, and gives help in response to the vaguest petition; there is plenty of experience to warrant us in that belief. But it becomes plainer and plainer to me

as I go on, that an important part of God's response to prayer is His sending power through those who pray. It is in accordance with what we learn from nature and from human life to suppose that power is far more effective when it is directed to a definite objective. These particular persons form centres in the web of spiritual life like the cell-bodies in the nervous system; in conveying power to them we use the most convenient and obvious path by which it can be sent abroad into the whole spiritual system. When we pray for them, definitely putting ourselves into touch with them, we not only impart to them something of our own energy—though this has an importance which is often overlooked—but by being at once in touch with them and properly disposed towards God, we are really allowing God Himself to pass through us to them, so that from them He may pass on to all those who are linked to them by ties of affection. Perhaps a word ought to be said about a further principle involved in this, especially as the last-mentioned class must include many who are not active lovers of God. In loving Him we open our hearts to Him so that He can flow into them. If we love those who love

Him, He uses them also as a way into us. Where the heart of a man is closed on the God-ward side but open through affection to other human hearts, He uses these latter as a way whereby He may steal into them. This is a consideration which greatly enhances the importance of loving and praying for those who do not realise what God is to them or guess what He might be to them if they would permit Him.

We are next provided with an occasion for remembering all—and consequently any—of God's people. This, I take it, includes all His people, whether they are consciously such or not. Then we focus our attention on " this congregation here present." It is obvious that we should, once again, think clearly and specifically of those who are physically present with us. We are gathered together (do we remember that " congregation " means " gathering together " ?) for mutual help and common action, so we ought to draw the bond close. Under other conditions we are unfortunately liable to see one another in distorting and misleading lights, and it is a useful corrective to look at one another in the light of God which drowns the irritating, superficial flaws

and reveals the beauty within. This sets us in the way of learning to view all those whom we meet as spirits in whom God works, to overleap all physical barriers and to penetrate behind the veils which speech and prejudice weave both in our brains and theirs. Besides those whose presence in the church is obvious, all whom we draw there in spirit, all those whom we love and all for whom we pray are part of the "congregation here present." They certainly ought to be present to our minds, and so they fall to be remembered at this point. I would venture to suggest to the clergy that, following the example of Dr. Illingworth, they should stop a moment after saying these words[1] and give us time to recollect those whom we specially wish to remember before God. Our petition for all these is that they may hear and receive thy holy Word. While this means, in the first place, that they may listen to the voice of God and act upon it, whether it come to them through the inward voice of instinct and conscience, or through other men; or through the Book

[1] I may be reading my own meaning into it, but I was greatly struck, in reading Illingworth's life, by the mention of his practice of making a long pause at this point.

which is called the Word of God, I cannot but think that its meaning extends further, to hearing and receiving Christ Himself Who is, in a unique sense, the Word, the means by which God makes His meaning plain and carries it into effect.

Then follows the petition for all sufferers, in saying which we naturally think first of those who are personally known to us, or have some special claim on us. For many of us this is probably the most crowded moment of the prayer and unless care is taken the merest chance may determine who is remembered and who is forgotten. It becomes, then, more evident than ever that we ought to include in our preparation for the service a thoughtful selection of persons who are to be remembered. This selection ought to be based on the classification given in the prayer itself, i.e. we ought to choose some persons for each petition, and to consider under which particular headings we shall place those people who are on our minds. In order to do this properly it is necessary from time to time to consider our Communions in groups, and systematically distribute our clients—if I may use the term—among the various days or weeks, allotting so

many to one Communion, so many or such a class to the next, and so on. As our care for the Fellowship widens it will be found that this extra trouble is amply rewarded. Interest increases because it becomes more definite and extended. Variety is given to our communions and every opportunity of partaking is valued, as we find that we need as many as we can get in order to find room for all those whom we wish to remember before God.

This petition is succeeded by the recollection of the departed. This, again, is not an occasion for vague sentiment and needs to be made definite by our thinking of our known friends in the other world. As we can only reach them by means of the spiritual side of our nature they become a means by which we can pass as spirits into the world of spirit. Those who are best known to us and most loved by us are the most easily descried of all those who are in that world with which we are so lamentably and culpably unfamiliar. Even our undeveloped spiritual eyesight catches sight of them with some ease, so powerful are the instincts of the heart. As this topic is of great interest and importance, I do not want to leave this last sentence unexpanded lest it should be mis-

leading. The word eyesight is used in a spiritual sense and for want of a better. But everyone knows how the feeling of his dead comes home to him. When he arouses that feeling he is looking towards them and moving towards them. When the feeling, as it were, augments itself they are in touch with him. These two things are sometimes separate, sometimes recollection does not grow into perception, while sometimes the feeling comes through no effort of our own. But they are often conjoined, and as the effort is repeated one becomes more adapted to it and feels the response more and more frequently.

None of those whom we have previously mentioned, and most certainly none of our departed are to be thought of for only a single moment and then allowed to pass out of mind, but are to be kept in view. If the suggestion made above be acted upon and we then try to keep in touch with them during the service, we find a great comfort and a great expansion of the field of life. It is really surprising, as we begin to look out for our friends in the hidden world, how real their presence is and how the lost physical perception of them is replaced by a vivid spiritual perception which warms our

heart just as did their presence in the body. The awful blank which a death has left ceases to be a featureless, meaningless gap, for little by little we see arise in that vacant space the fair and delicate hues of a higher life. It is as when a person remains in a church at night when all the lights have been extinguished. All grows shapeless and awful in the gloom, the heart is depressed and nerves begin to tremble. But ere long his power of sight is aroused and the shadows shape themselves into the outline of the familiar fane. The well-known surroundings return, robed in a new dignity and filled with a holier calm. The stillness becomes more and more sustaining, and presently the moonlight begins to thin the darkness till the bright rays give back colour and form to the windows and fill the house with their strange light, so that it seems unearthly in substance but clear and beautiful in form. And if he remain, at last the dawn will come giving a warmer life and an exalted beauty beside which the glare of the evening lights seems garish and unnatural.

It is important to notice that we are bidden to think happily about our dead—" we also bless thy holy name for all thy servants de-

parted this life." This involves putting away the sorrow which is ours, and regarding only the gladness which is theirs. We have to think of them as they are, shaking off the devastating thought that they have perished. We have to think of them as they are in Christ, full of His power, full of vigour and full of life. As we thus clear our minds we come to rejoice in them, to exult in the possession of such friends and to bless God for them in all sincerity. Whereas our sorrow cut us off from them, this joy unites us to them and raises us up into their fellowship with the Lord. Our way of thinking about our own death suffers a fundamental change. As that world comes to contain a greater number of our friends, it becomes more and more familiar to us until it begins to wear the aspect of a true home. "Where your treasure is there will your heart be also," and what treasure have we which can be valued as we value our friends? In joining their fellowship in prayer we are enabled by love and grace to pass through the gate of death day by day, so that its horror fades, and we recognise it as the way opened and consecrated by our Lord when He passed through death to life.

It is not, I find, very difficult to get into this

way of looking at our dead as they really are in Christ, free and happy. I have waited till this easier task has been thought over before indicating a similar but more difficult task which I should have mentioned before, had I adhered rigidly to the order of the prayer. Just as we have to allow our recollection of our departed to be altered into accordance with their present condition in the spiritual world, so we have to allow our view of the sick and suffering to be altered as we think of their being brought near to Christ. We have to see each of them strengthened in the inner man. Otherwise we are carrying the weakness into their spiritual nature, instead of helping the spiritual strength to increase until it is powerful enough to overcome the resistance of the material world. There is a very real danger that we may strengthen whatever hold the idea of helplessness has taken upon their minds, by the power of suggestion acting all the more strongly because we come into such intimate contact with them. Suggestion of some kind is bound to take place. What is in our minds inevitably leaks into theirs. We owe it to them, then, to think of them as being renewed in Christ, in order that we may suggest to them the hope

and faith which pave the way for His work on their minds and bodies.

After this digression let us return to the recollection of the departed. This is not merely to be a source of personal comfort, a remedy for our private griefs. We are to take a wider outlook, and to see that we are encompassed by a great cloud of witnesses. We are bidden to give thanks " for *all* thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear." Now certain of the saints of God have become very definite to our minds, especially if we are in the habit of meditating on the Gospels. We are, then, in a position to perceive these also, and the more often we try to do it, the more real the perception becomes. They also are made more visible as we draw nearer to the light of Christ's presence. Moreover, the perception becomes so associated with these words that as we say them our minds instinctively awaken to the presence of the innumerable company which is associated with them. So they too help us to take up our position in and with the Invisible Church. We further pray that " with them we may be partakers of His Heavenly Kingdom." Although this may not be completely or continuously achieved in the

present it is begun now and we have to do our share to enable it to be done to the fullest extent. We must have definite points at which to begin our efforts to be partakers of the Kingdom, and these, who are so easily recognised by us and so pre-eminently identified with the life of the Heavenly City, afford us exactly what we need.

" That with them we may be partakers of thy heavenly kingdom." The phrase " with them " seems to have a double meaning. We may take it, expressing the thought on which we have just dwelt, as a prayer that we may be partakers with them, i.e. that we may share what they share. In this case it is a prayer for ourselves—though that word ourselves includes all whom we are presenting before God. " With them " may, however, be so taken as to give the sentence the meaning, " that they and we may be partakers," so that it includes a prayer for them. As we have learnt in our own lives, this participation in the life of the spiritual world grows greater and greater : it is not simply the acquirement of a status with a small and limited set of duties and privileges, but an expansion of our nature so that it enters into the lives of others and finds increasing

opportunities of action in the life of the whole, and we may well believe that it opens unlimited possibilities of development. The idea of praying for the great saints may seem startling at first, but it becomes less so when we remember that the power of God is not only needed in the struggle against sin, but for the maintenance, let alone the extension of spiritual life. As I do not wish to raise controversial points, I will not pursue the subject further, but I feel that I must make one more suggestion, and so I venture to remind my readers that the possibility of praying *with* the Saints demands much more attention than has usually been paid to it.

VI

REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS

"YE that . . . are in love and charity with your neighbours." The whole service has been fitting us to comply with the requirement here laid down. We have been looking at our fellow Christians under the light of God, which brings out all that is lovable in them, while we have been bringing into action the Christ-like side of our own nature, which always tends to love. Coldness and hostility arise through our looking at our fellows through the eyes of the flesh only, and seeing them disfigured by the shadows of the world. But now we have been looking at them with the eyes of the spirit; we have been opening our hearts to them; we have been regarding them as comrades. If we will only stop and think, we shall see that the

results are so valuable and so different from our ordinary condition, that we shall certainly "intend to lead a new life," to go on leading this new life, new because it is such a contrast to the old, and new because love is always at the Spring. In addition to this, we feel better qualified to respond to the call "Ye that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins," because the service has led us into a position from which sin appears more repellent; we have undergone a repentance, i.e. a change of mind, which at least shows the possibility of a permanent change of mind with regard to our temptations. We know that it is possible to resent and reject them. But we can only continue at this height by the help of God, so we "draw near to Him in faith" in order to "take this holy Sacrament to our comfort," not the comfort of being assured that things are not so bad after all, but "comfort" in its proper Bible sense of strengthening.

Then follows the General Confession. Once again we are to make this definite by putting into it what we are aware of personally, which in the first place is the sin of each person who says the words. But there must be more than this. When I join in the Confession I do not

say, "I acknowledge and bewail my manifold sins and wickedness," but "We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness." There seems to be a good reason why I should not say the first and an equally good reason why I should say the second. With regard to the first, is it often true that "the remembrance of my sins is grievous to me," or that I feel that "the burden of them is intolerable"? I think not. It might ring true occasionally, but there must be very few who habitually feel like that. I am not forgetting that the language of prayer ought not to limit us to the stage which we have reached, but to represent a higher pitch of feeling after which we are striving. Nevertheless, the gap here is so wide that the language is unnatural.

With regard to the second form, "*We* acknowledge," etc., I wish to raise a very large question, and so may be permitted to begin from another point. For one reason and another we are all acutely sensible of the sins of society and the defects of the Church. We are prone to express our feelings about these things in angry denunciations. But "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God": denunciation does very little

good, especially if it never reaches the ears of the persons involved. Scolding has had a thorough trial and has proved worse than futile. Grumbling does no good to the community and harms the grumblers, inducing in them a fatal conception of their own superiority. Besides this, if any real change is to come about, it must begin in the hearts and spirits of men. If, then, we are to make any vital difference, we must begin on the spiritual side, as opposed to the physical or earthly side. In such a kind of prayer as has been suggested above, we are meeting men as spirits in a spiritual world. We are spiritual centres in a spiritual body of which they also are members. In this body, as in a physical body, any change in one nervous centre affects the others. If we change our own anger into regret, the change of feeling will be transmitted to their spirits, promoting a fundamental alteration. It may be that there is already an element of regret in their feelings, but it needs stimulating, and so long as it does not find expression it must remain ineffective. Undefined feelings produce only an indefinite unrest which may find almost any kind of relief but the right one. If we

give the right expression to it, then it has received a form which is recognisable by the whole body and by each of its members. If we adopt a right attitude, others will tend to adopt it. Compunction has to be begun at some point in the body; we who understand the necessity for it ought to begin it. We are thus afforded another opportunity of putting ourselves in the place of others and so losing our lives for the sake of the Gospel, the Good News that a change of heart is possible and practicable. All these reasons seem to urge us to the use of these words of confession in their literal sense, so that in saying it we may become the lips, or even the brain, of the group to which we belong, and so affect the whole Body. We cannot expect to have it all our own way. We are not the only centres, and many of the others are centres of irritation quite as active in their way as we are in ours. But the prayer, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do," is not without power to procure some healing for them. Meantime we learn that God is with us in these efforts, for we can trace their effects even in people with whom we have otherwise failed, and can also observe a marked differ-

ence in ourselves. Indeed, it is because of the practical results which I have observed and known that I hold the opinions which I have stated.

I should like to re-inforce my contention from another side. We share in some of the sins of the community, but not in others. Let us consider these two classes separately. As for the first, I deepen my penitence by saying "*our* sins," because my appreciation of my sins is heightened when I survey them over a larger field. What seems a small fault in myself, say my irritability, takes on a darker significance as I trace the extent and intensity of its action in the world around me. On the other hand, just because I know the fascination of these sins, I can understand those who commit them, and so can put myself in their place more easily. This seems to offer a fitting method of reparation. Changed myself by Christ, however slightly it may be, I am using my transformed spirit to help to rectify the wills of those who are swayed in the wrong direction, including, alas, some who have turned aside under pressure from me. I might perhaps put it more accurately by saying that instead of sending forth a stream of

evil suggestion, I am allowing the transforming energy of Christ to flow through me along the very channels worn by my evil and bitter thoughts. So our Lord makes an opportunity for Himself even out of my faulty past.

But what of temptations from which we do not suffer? It is as well to make sure, first of all, that they are such. We may fall victim to a given sin in some other form, e.g. we may hate intoxication by drink or drugs, and yet be addicted to intoxication by bad temper. But in the case of sins which have no hold on us, we have a qualification for helping in the work of repentance which is quite different from that of which we have just been thinking. As I have already pointed out, a just estimate of the gravity of sin can only be made from the standpoint of holiness. So far, then, as God has kept us pure with regard to a given sin, we are the better able to appreciate the degree of penitence needful for it, and to bring it before God with such due regret as those who commit it cannot yet attain. Even without considering the response of God, it is obvious that this is bound to have an effect on the sinners, because we are so closely connected with them, especially if we love them,

that our frame of mind is bound to influence theirs.

In the General Confession we have a group of people, acting as a single organ in that spiritual organism which we call the Body of Christ, collecting the life-blood from all about them and sending it up to the great Purifier for cleansing. The Absolution, which is then pronounced, marks the returning tide of Christ's life-blood coming down into us that it may flow out through the channels which we have been draining. This is symbolised by the priest's turning to the people so that his voice travels towards them, in the opposite direction to that in which they spoke.

The priest speaks, of course, not as a private person but as the mouthpiece of the whole Church, the Body through which the Blood flows, the organism through which Christ acts. I do not say that nothing more is involved, or that He acts in no other way. But even as a gesture of the Church this act has great importance. Taking a person's hand on meeting him is only a gesture, but it has its effect when it is done heartily and true friendship lies behind it. The importance of such actions, when they are supported by a real intention

and an agreement as to their meaning, is brought out in the history of the Baptism of our Lord. John's baptism was merely the accustomed ritual expression of a belief common among the Jews of his day, a conventional religious act. But Christ demanded it for Himself, and commanded John so to baptise Him, describing it as an act of righteousness, "Thus it behoves us to fulfil all righteousness." To take another case; were there nothing else in a Christian Baptism but the formal reception of a child into the Christian community, it would have a potent effect because it has the whole mind of Christendom behind it. Similarly, behind the words of the Absolution is the mind of the whole church, that mind which God charges with His own meaning and reinforces with His own good-will. This mind is focussed in the speaker by the deliberate intention of the church, and from him it passes on to us and through us. We are still to act as channels of power and so must still hold close to our hearts those whom we would help. Nor can the outflow be limited to those on whom we are fixing our attention; chords of love for ever extend from our hearts to others—perhaps to

many others of whom we are not thinking, and since these are not broken by the forgetfulness of the moment, the Divine thrill must pass out through them also, God only knows how far.

While it is necessary to retain in the foreground of our thoughts the idea of helping and serving others, it is not necessary to forget or to ignore the help which comes to each of us personally. The Absolution is a point at which we may legitimately make an attempt to ascertain and grasp the benefit which accrues to the individual soul. Raised to a greater height of penitence, not only by our concentrated efforts after sincerity, but also by our endeavours to attain penitence for others aided by the thrust of the common mind behind us, and then listening with undivided attention to the proclamation of the forgiveness of God, so that we are confronted by that single fact, we are in a better position than usual for observing the profound and penetrating effect of God's pardon and restoration. We know in that moment, and we can ponder, while the message is being confirmed in the Comfortable words, the calm which follows when the fevers of sin are allayed by

the health-giving flow of divine life. Depression and dulness may come in to obscure the effect in later hours, but if we have been at the pains to observe the reality of the renewal of goodness through Christ, we shall know that though they conceal, they have not destroyed, for we can feel it deep down in our hearts and find it revive when recollection gives it its opportunity. Once again we are enabled to discover the fact which lies behind a religious word, by observation instead of deduction from the statements of others. We have got it to look at, instead of having to try to make out its nature from what others say. We do not need to hunt through a confusion of feelings, to discover which of them corresponds to the phrases which we have heard others use; we are face to face with the fact, and can allow it to charge the word Forgiveness with its own meaning and its own personal application. The descriptions given by others may or may not help to elucidate our feelings, but here we know what it is that we feel, and can attach its meaning to whatever response is given by the chords of our own heart.

VII

WITH ALL THE COMPANY OF HEAVEN

NOW rings out the call, "Lift up your hearts," bidding us to strive to exert our faculties on a higher level and to raise the whole of our nature to a height which we have hitherto touched only with the fringe of the spirit. The word heart has come to mean "affections," but this was not the old, Biblical meaning of the word, which was rather what we now mean when we say "mind" or "brains." It referred to the intelligence. I ask the reader to notice what is involved in the use of this expression when thus amended. We have been trying to stir up our affections, and we must continue to do so. The head is not to be set against the heart, or one used to the exclusion of the other. But we are meant to use our brains, not only in thinking out the

meaning of the service, before or afterwards, but at the time in order to grasp our spiritual surroundings and to look intelligently at Him Whom we approach. Compare the warning in the Venite at the beginning of Morning Prayer, "harden not your hearts." Here the mention of "hard-heartedness" in our current sense of the word is irrelevant: there is no particular opportunity of cruelty or callousness at Matins. But there is a necessity for arousing the mind lest it fall into thoughtlessness and a kind of semi-torpor. We too easily allow the familiar cadence of the words of the service to lull our minds into a fruitless state of languid acquiescence, or permit our thoughts to confine themselves to a narrow, beaten rut. We need to cultivate a certain open-mindedness, a readiness on the part of the brain to study and define whatever the spirit encounters. We need to be vigorous and alert if, instead of becoming dull to our surroundings, we are to be exhilarated by the contemplation of an endless novelty and variety of life. It is so fatally easy to let the brain sink to its average level and only be cognisant of the surface of the service without penetrating further. As the action progresses

it is necessary to rise higher and higher, and so the demand on our energies increases. So, although we have been exerting our minds already, we are explicitly bidden to make another and more determined effort, "Lift up your hearts," or, to paraphrase it, "Raise the level of your thoughts," "Lift up your heads and look above," and we respond, suiting the action to the word, "We lift them up unto the Lord." Leaving all else for the moment we look on Him in order that we may be drawn upwards towards Him.

The meaning of this call and its response is simple enough. But the meaning of the subsequent, "Let us give thanks unto our Lord God," is not quite so easily unravelled, not that it is really difficult, but because it is complicated to a certain degree. In the first place, the very sight of God makes us thankful. His beauty and lovableness, however dimly seen, strike us so forcibly that we must speak of them. If we merely remarked them, we should fall into the attitude of detached spectators, and thus put a distance between ourselves and God. We want to tell Him what He is to us, as a man praises his hero to his face without derogation to himself or

arrogance in the other. Praising God is natural to every worshipper, and is justified by the lofty and sanguine temper of mind which it produces, but it has been so fiercely criticised that it may be as well to reconsider its primary purpose and effect. We recite the praises of God in order to concentrate our minds on Him, to set Him before our eyes, and so to become absorbed in His greatness. The recounting of His majesty gains in effectiveness when it becomes an address to Him, as the change from " He " to " Thou " expresses our personal relation to Him, and keeps on expressing it, so that, instead of being stated and passed by, it can grow in vitality. A certain degree of enthusiasm and fervour are necessarily required for the effort, and singing, which is the natural accompaniment, or rather expression, of praise when feeling has attained to a certain intensity, helps us to arouse the energy by means of which we can rise to the greatest of great themes. Who has not known men who were striving for some great cause strengthen and invigorate themselves by chanting its praises? Eloquence and song have carried men over many difficult journeys along the road to liberty—and ours

is a road to liberty, for we seek God, "Whose service is perfect freedom."

Since the sight of God, then, draws us upward into the spiritual world, we give thanks for joy at entering more fully into the spiritual life. We are thankful for the change in ourselves, and thankful for the changed conditions under which we are meeting our friends, thankful again for seeing them in the nearer light of God, thankful because the presence of our departed grows clearer. In addition, we give thanks because we are coming into closer touch with the Company of Heaven as they engage in that great act of worship of which our service is but a manifestation. Partly, as it seems to me, for this reason, and partly because we cannot rise to the height of the great hymn of adoration which is so soon to follow unless we can throw ourselves into the torrent of their praise, we are bidden to look around on the Hosts who sing it, "Therefore with Angels and Archangels and all the Company of Heaven we laud and magnify Thy glorious name." This is another point in the service at which each person can the more easily observe and discover the spiritual world for himself because

all the attention of the community is directed to a stated object. But here a note of warning is needed. Spiritual beings are spiritually discerned. There are very few of us who are so artistic that spiritual impressions produce definite pictures in our minds. But, even without this faculty, each can feel in his own characteristic way the presence of beings whose life is far more intense than his own. We do not, however, find a type of life standing absolutely by itself and producing an entirely peculiar impression of its own. "All the company of Heaven" brings in the whole companionship of Heaven, which reaches out on the one side to include all the human spirits of the Fellowship from the humblest worshipper to the greatest saint, as well as on the other side to those great beings who are pure knowledge and love.

Much emphasis has been laid upon the fact that a crowd has power to draw all its members down to its level. But surely we have all known at some time what it is to find a crowd drawing us up to its level. For this to take place, not only had the crowd to be above our level, but we had to identify ourselves with it. It would have had no power to elevate us if we

had remained detached or wrapped ourselves in our own thoughts. We need to act here as we acted then. We take a glance at the familiar faces of our friends who surround us in the spirit, and then look on the great ones by whom they are accompanied. Interest in them obliterates the thought of self and its limitations, so that we are set free to grow to the greatness of their adoration. Nor is this all. Those on whom we look are beheld in the light of God, and His glory is reflected from them in a thousand divers rays and revealed in them in manifold colours. Thus, as on a summer day when we go out of doors, we look up for a moment at the glorious sun and then look around to see the same light displayed in all its component hues in cloud and hill, on tree and flower, "Holy, holy, holy" lifts our thoughts to the overwhelming glory of God, and straightway "Lord God of Hosts" turns them to the revelation of God in the illuminated spirits who are permeated by His presence. This community of spirits at which we are looking is Heaven, and we rejoice beholding Heaven full of God's glory. But we are not to restrict the glory to Heaven or look for it there alone. Having caught sight

of it, we are to follow it downwards and see it shining through the denser media of Creation, both through Nature and through Man. The very church in which we kneel, the earth which sustains it, and the sky which overarches it, are full of God's glory. The little company who kneel around us breathe the radiant atmosphere of the Divine. "Heaven *and earth* are full of Thy Glory." Thus we obtain a perception of the light of the other world glimmering even through this. Immediately we gather it into one single thought, and, flung upwards by the Spirit, springing like a fountain through earth and heaven, we are borne up before the throne with "Glory be to Thee, O Lord most high." "Glory be to Thee"—"Flash back the splendour to its Source."

It will thus be seen that in rising to God we are able to make use of our experience of friendship and our perception, such as it may be, of the super-human element in the spiritual world. But I should like to enlarge on one or two points which are implied in what has just been said. First, then, it may be necessary to offer some justification for the method which we use. We are all inclined to be over-

influenced by the dictum that we must turn away from all creatures in order to see God. But to do this and never anything else is to break with the general method of God's revelation through Israel and through Christ. Moses seems to have a direct and lonely perception of God. He speaks to Him face to face, but he is told, "Thou canst not see My face." Isaiah sees Him surrounded by the Cherubim, and Ezekiel sees His power and presence displayed in the gigantic forms of the Living Creatures. When it comes to more familiar ground and the glory of God is manifested in a human form, the same holds good. The Christ of the Gospels is no solitary like the Baptist: He always appears on the stage of history surrounded by His friends. Indeed, as we read the Gospels, we gain a very large part of our knowledge about Him from the play of His character upon His followers. When He shall come in all the supremacy of His majesty, He is to be accompanied by His angels and to bring with Him those that sleep in Him.

Again, Creation is a manifestation of God and, as such, a means of perceiving Him. "The heavens declare the glory of God" is

not an unfamiliar idea, but there is an especial reason why we should make deliberate use of it at our Communions. Perhaps one of the greatest spiritual advances of the late century was the increasing appreciation of Nature, not simply as an object of study and a basis for clear thinking, but as something which aroused in us deeper functions than reasoning, and awoke "thoughts that do lie too deep for tears." We are all familiar with the impression made on us by mountain and flower. If we try to speak of them our words are soon exhausted, and in any case are too trivial to express what we felt; indeed, our memories may be incapable of reviving in our minds the image of that beauty. But we know what we felt: we know how to look for what we felt: we ought to recognise that what we felt was God. So, when we come to look for Him in our worship, we ought to use the training which the contemplation of Nature has afforded us, and be on the watch for the occurrence of the same impression, for it points to the same cause, the presence of God Almighty. Thus we can bring together two of our most cherished possessions, and our

experiences on the hill-side and before the altar will elucidate and deepen each other.

Along the spacious pathway in our hearts which is opened by these high and holy thoughts, now comes the simple plea of the struggling and aspiring souls who are met together to seek their place in the festival of the Fellowship of God, "We do not presume to come to this Thy Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in Thy manifold and great mercies." The beautiful humility of this prayer is the noble humility of true strength, humble because it has learnt that its strength is derived and not self-created, and strong because it has just beheld how from one inexhaustible Source power wells up in manifold forms in the myriad lives of God's children. We notice again that the plural is used: each of us says We, not I. The corporate note is emphasised at every step. We are still holding to our friends. We do not let slip what we have just seen; we are at pains to remember it, for what we beheld in all the company around us was the display of the active mercy of God, the mercy which does not end with pity but goes on to strengthen

and perfect, the mercy which preserves and augments the beauty of the spirit in spite of the deformations of the flesh. That same mercy has been felt in us, enabling us to behold the Lord in some sort, and we now ask that it be so increased as to empower us to become partakers of His Nature.

The mention of the Table with its allusion to the story of the foreign woman who came to plead for help for her daughter, " we are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under Thy table," is a timely reminder that we are not simply mingling with a gorgeous spectacle, but coming to a family meal. For not only does it require a deliberate effort to keep the homely side from being lost to our thoughts, but like the Syro-Phenician we are beset by a feeling of unworthiness. As we think of the saints around us and of the privilege to which we are called, the thought of our unworthiness smoulders in our hearts. She was able to persist because she came, not for her own sake, but for the sake of another. And though we are all too well aware that we are so alien that we can only be admitted on His sufferance, though in the light of that life we feel so ludicrously mean and stunted that

we feel we ought to depart, nevertheless the thought of service which we are trying to do for others helps us to hold our ground and to persist despite all our shrinking.

While it is easy to enter into this prayer as a whole, yet it contains one very difficult clause, "that our sinful bodies may be made clean by His body, and our souls washed through His most precious blood." It is often urged that an unjustifiable distinction is here made between the effect of the Body and that of the Blood. But I do not think that it is at all necessary to set the one clause against the other. In any case I am doubtful whether we could perceive such a distinction, even if it existed; I certainly have not perceived it myself, and therefore the question really lies outside the province of this book. I feel bound, however, to raise another difficulty which is a great hindrance, though many people seem reluctant to admit, or at least to face it. Most of us, I fear, only tolerate the phrase, the Blood of Christ, because it has become established. We do not use it spontaneously, or enter naturally into its meaning. This is because we think of blood as spilt, outside the body, dead stuff which is not really

blood at all, but the remains of blood. We ought to think of it as it is in reality, in its proper state and place in our bodies. Such true and living blood has four suggestive functions, it feeds, it warms, it cleanses and it co-ordinates. It is continually carrying away the waste and poisonous products which would imperil health. It conveys air to every organ, it carries the life-giving breath which feeds the vital fire. If we remember that Spiritus means breath, we shall find this function of the blood very suggestive. It enables the various organs to respond to, to assist, and to rectify changes in one another. But what I am laying stress on at the moment is the way in which it feeds and cleanses the whole body, penetrating every part and supplying all its needs. This brings out the necessity for being in perfect connection with that Body which is a combination of lives served and unified by the penetrative life of its Lord. If a cell (i.e. a unit of life) be taken out of the human body, or be cut off from the supply of blood, it dies. Again, the blood must have free passage on its way to feed the other members, otherwise the flow is choked, and not only is the member itself hurt, but others are starved. So the life

of Christ must be admitted into us, or we die; it must have an outlet, or we perish and others are impoverished. Since the Blood does its own work, or to be more exact, Christ does His own work and adjusts the gift according to the need, our business is to open our hearts to Him and to our fellows so that He may have a clear course.

"That He may dwell in us." These words sound like the expression of a far-off hope, whereas they ought continually to recall an experience, so that it may be repeated until it becomes habitual. Let us, for once, thrust aside the mock modesty which prefers to make a low estimate of its spiritual experiences lest it should have to live up to them. We are conscious at times of Somebody Else within us Who makes us long to burst the bonds of our selfishness, or makes us weary of being shut into ourselves, or presses greater thoughts upon us than our minds can grasp. It is Somebody Else, for, sometimes at least, we find ourselves impelled to do things which surprise us and make our ordinary actions look mean and timid. The more we study these thoughts and actions the more we see that they accord with the picture of Christ which is

given in the Gospels, and so we identify that Other Who is in us with our Lord.

But He is not only perceived as an element within us. Sometimes, and particularly at our Communions, we feel Him all around us. He is our spiritual atmosphere. Besides this, as we come to perceive Christ in our brethren and our brethren in Christ, and little by little the life of the Body becomes a reality to us, we learn to appreciate the fact that living in the Body of Christ is living in Christ. Thus, adding one recollection to another, and joining glimpse to glimpse, we have ground to hope that it will become permanently true and evident that we dwell in Him and He in us.

VIII

THE CONSECRATION AND THE RECEPTION

THERE is a series of words at the beginning of the Prayer of Consecration, each member of which needs some thought. "Redemption," although it includes in its meaning release from the domination of sin, really signifies a change from one state to another. Unless we get into the second state, we have not left the first, and there is no real change. The first state is the life of the flesh, the second the life of the spirit. We are removed from slavery in a debased society into liberty in an ennobling society. This is exactly what we have been seeking all along. At this point, however, we are clearly reminded that these our efforts to raise our friends and ourselves into the Heavenly City are an endeavour to avail our-

selves of an upward current, created by the action of Christ. We have really been using the power of the Cross of Him Who said "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me."

"Oblation" brings out another aspect of the facts. An oblation is something brought to a person—in this case God. Offering, which is a hybrid word expressing the same idea, often misleads because in using it we think of the offering in relation to the giver rather than to the receiver, as our (or my) offering rather than as an offering to God. Our Lord lifted humanity and brought it up against God, so that He could take hold of it, thus making a complete contact whereby God's power may flow into humanity. Christ continues to do this, and this, again, is precisely what we are endeavouring to do in conjunction with Him. We are merely bending our wills and adjusting our energies to the line along which He is acting.

"Sacrifice" is a word which has lost more than half its meaning. Properly speaking, a sacrifice is a thing which is made holy by being given or dedicated to God. There are two stages in this process, corresponding to the two stages in the history of the word holy:

first the thing is separated from common use and set apart for God, then it is presented to God and received by Him, becoming holy in the sense of being possessed by God. So, with man, separation from sin is but the first stage towards holiness; he is holy only in a negative sense until he comes into a vital connection with God. Once again we are reminded that the heart of our service is the bringing of humanity to God. This was effected by Christ and needs no re-doing. All that remains to be done is that each individual, in his turn, should be identified with Him, by being made a sharer of His Humanity, and of that greater Body which He is building up of souls made one with Him. This general or corporate relation to Christ also includes a personal relation by which each incorporated soul is brought into direct contact with God. It is obvious that this contact with God and the holiness which naturally results, if they are real, must produce tangible effects. Given time and opportunity, these can be detected in the changes produced in the lives of those whom we, moved by Christ, draw with us to God. Everyone who makes use of the Communion to help others ought to verify this, if

only to do justice to God. Similar changes will become perceptible in ourselves also, and we ought to watch ourselves and mark them; otherwise the change which arises in the spirit is checked as soon as ever it reaches the threshold of the brain. For unless the brain grapples with the spiritual impression and defines it in some way, obscure though it may be, the mind cannot join in the movement which has been set up in the spirit. Hence arises the divorce between the head and the heart which is such a trouble in the present religious situation. But even apart from this we are inclined to shy at the very idea of detecting holiness in ourselves. This is because we construe "feeling holiness in myself," as "feeling that I am holy," which of course reeks of pride, whereas we ought to construe it as "feeling God in ourselves," which engenders a salutary humility, though also, it must be admitted, a terrible sense of responsibility. A sense of increasing holiness is not a perception that we are better than other people, or that we have improved ourselves, but a perception of God. As this becomes clear it abolishes the obsession of self, though of course it does not destroy our per-

sonality. Religious terms are only valuable so far as they embody experience, and the word sacrifice sorely needs re-charging with meaning in some such way as I have tried to point out.

"Satisfaction" introduces another aspect under which the spiritual change may be observed. There can be no satisfaction, for God or man, in human nature so long as it is sinful. Nothing can give satisfaction except a restored humanity, i.e. humanity put into a satisfactory condition. This is what Christ procured and secured. In His own person, in His own human nature He repelled all the spiritual disease which had afflicted humanity, and won immunity from it. He resisted all the attacks that had reduced humanity to so unsatisfactory a condition. Because He was the Son of Man, the focus of the human race, and the Son of God, the focus through which comes the power of God, His personal victory was the potential gain of all who should be identified with Him. When the Head shook off the terror, the palsy died out of the limbs. Battling with the terror, sustaining Himself against it, enduring it undauntedly through the valley of the shadow involved Him in terrible suffering,

which no doubt contributed its own share to the effect of His action. But we blind ourselves to the character of the results if we fix our attention exclusively on the pain instead of considering the effort as a whole. When we use the word Agony for the events of Gethsemane and Calvary, we must remember that it is not just another name for suffering, but means a painful struggle, the emphasis being on the struggle and not on the pain. When we say that He agonized, we do not mean that He was afflicted, but that He persisted, in spite of pain, in labouring to redress an unsatisfactory state of affairs, and succeeded because he regarded the opportunity of service more than the pain.

From our own side we can perceive the satisfactory state into which He put human nature, but we may fall into grievous error if we do not recognise its source. We ought not to allow our Communions to produce in us any feeling of self-satisfaction : that would be a parody and not a realisation of the fact which Christ has accomplished. There is a true satisfaction to be felt, a satisfaction too great to have been produced by ourselves, a satisfaction which we feel within ourselves and

around ourselves. When we revert to the level of the unredeemed world we are uneasy because our minds are dissatisfied; but in the redeemed world we are steadied and comforted because we are satisfied. All this depends on a deeper fact, which indeed is demonstrated by it and manifested in it. In the old, unrectified life we are continually in trouble because we do not satisfy God, and consequently come into conflict with His laws to our great hurt. But in the new life God is satisfied with our transformed character and we are enabled to live in accordance with His laws which consequently become our support and give us stability.

"Who did institute and . . . command us to continue a perpetual memory of that His precious death." We have to make the remembrance of the historical facts the basis of our thoughts, and use it as a guide to our spiritual sight, since those facts were the precise form in which Christ chose to manifest His action in the material world. If it be a true saying, "The purpose and use of matter are to give definition to the things of the spirit," this kind of remembrance is of the utmost importance. We ought to picture the Death

and Passion as clearly as we can in order to make sure that we lay hold on the facts instead of trying to grasp our own fancies. But the memory of which we here speak is not merely a memory of what is past and over, for the effect of the Death has not ceased, nor can the Death be taken apart from Him Who died. Our remembrance is of One Who is very much alive, but is, at least in part, what He is because He died. In that heavenly service which forms the background of our thoughts and ought to be the object of our vision, He is perceived on the Altar as "the Lamb as it had been slain." But it has to be remembered that "Memory" stands for Memorial, the Memorial foreshadowed by the old Memorial Sacrifices which were the expression of the desire that God should remember Israel. I must confess that this idea of asking God to remember His people has been a puzzle to me. I have not been able to think the problem out, but experiment has shown me that the Jews were acting on a right method. For I find that if I try to make my mind dwell on such a phrase as "I will remember God" or even "Help me to remember Thee," I fail and the idea vanishes from my mind, whereas if I use

"Remember me, O Lord," the effect is considerable and lasting. It seems to me that this view is consistent with the use of the next words, "until His coming again." No doubt His coming again is prepared for by our increasing mindfulness of Him, but after all it is His action not ours; we do not bring Him, He comes. I cannot leave this phrase, "until His Coming again," without remarking that it revives the thought suggested by the Creed, the Second Coming as the culmination of His continual Comings, particularly to the Family Meal, the Sacrament.

We now come to the question of the Consecration. I shall continue to confine myself to facts which I know to be spiritually verifiable and to keep as far away as I can from all controversial and theoretical questions. I will therefore confine myself to pointing out that as we recount the history of the Institution we are to recollect watchfully that Christ is the real Consecrator, and that He does now what He did then. The fact that His words are "Do this in remembrance of Me," combined with the fact that we—through the accredited spokesman of the congregation present and of the church at large—say the

words and perform the actions, brings out another fact, that we are doing this as members of Christ, i.e. parts of His Body, the organism through which He acts, as we act by means of our bodies. We are His Hands with which He breaks the bread, His lips with which He speaks the words. The idea of something taking place in the family circle is concentrated into the idea of something done by Christ Himself in Himself, for we cannot separate His Body from Himself. The words left ringing in our ears by the preceding prayer and meant to remain with us till our reception of the sacrament, "that we may evermore dwell in Him and He in us," cast a different light and use another symbolism, yet they express the same profound but simple truth of our more than nearness to Christ. "Closer is He than breathing, nearer than hands and feet." Speaking in this manner produces a certain confusion of words, but thinking like this sets us free to observe the unity of the facts, as we shall have occasion to see later on. For the rest let us fix our attention on the Elements after consecration. These are given to us with the description (or, to put it at the lowest, are given to us with an expression of

belief that we are receiving) the Body and Blood of Christ. One has to start from some assumption, and the assumption which I make is twofold, first that our Lord meant what He said, and second that my physical faculties are reliable because God-given. Consequently, since to my sight, my touch and my taste the Bread is still bread and the Wine still wine, I believe them still to be such. Because of our Lord's promise I believe that what I am receiving is His Body and Blood. Believing as I do that faith is not sure of itself and consequently is not faith unless it tries to discern its object, I have regarded the Sacrament carefully and steadily, with the result that I have become aware of something far greater than bread and wine, a something which defines itself as Someone Who increasingly defines Himself as our Lord. There is no other time when I am so sensible of our Lord's presence as at the Sacrament. This has been rather a surprise to me as I should have expected it to be clearer in Meditation, when I approached Him in what seemed to me to be a more direct and spiritual manner. But there the fact stands as I have experienced it, and, as I now see, the same experience has been

felt by the Church all through her existence, and has been the ground of her belief in the intimate relation of the elements to the Body and Blood, of the material to the spiritual, of the visible to the invisible. I have no means of discovering how the two are related. In any case that is part of the great question of the relation between matter and spirit, which is being raised but is far from a settlement. In the meantime it may be pointed out that we find the same association of matter and spirit in ourselves. Looked at from one point of view I am a spirit, from another an animal. I am a soul but I have a body. I am part of the spiritual world, but I am also part of the physical world. The difficulties about the Sacrament are exactly paralleled. It is absurd to say that I am sitting in this chair, I am a spirit and spirits are not in the same world as chairs. From the same point of view it is absurd to say that my soul is in my body, a soul cannot be enclosed by a piece of matter. But one can, one does, one must use such expressions because they express facts as we experience them, and help us to clarify our impressions.

Of course I first accepted the belief in the

Sacrament of the Body and Blood on the authority of the Church, just as when I was at school I accepted scientific statements on the authority of my teachers, as being presumably a summary of experience. I also thought it wiser to test an accepted theory than to invent and test some theory of my own. I retain that belief because I have, though gradually and imperfectly, come to perceive Christ there. I know that it is often said that you can work yourself up to believe anything. Well, I have tested this statement also and do not find it true—at all events of a hypercritical mind like mine. I have accepted statements from other authorities and wholeheartedly acted on them, but there was no voice nor any that answered. But as I have gone on with this of which we are thinking, I have become more and more impressed by the difference between the intellectual acceptance with which one begins and the knowledge to which one comes. At first I held the belief, but now the fact thrusts itself on me, often when I am scarcely in the mood for it. The words "The Sacrament of the Body and Blood" defined a conception for me at first but now they name a perception and form the

title of a rich and varied life which is beyond all definition. I was told but I did not know; now I know but cannot tell.

This kind of experience is very common, far more common than is generally supposed. Indeed I make bold to appeal to communicants to set the impression which the Sacrament makes upon them now side by side with the impression which it made on them in the early days of their participation. Many of them will find that they have been inclined, perhaps even taught, to disregard a genuine awareness of Him, Who is the greatest of all facts. And if they cannot find such an awareness, I venture to assert that it is there: some habitual adjustment or some instinctive uprising takes place, perhaps unperceived because they are habitual and instinctive: but if they go on seeking, they will find, if they go on scrutinising they will identify Him, perhaps in some most homely and familiar guise.

When I have been speaking of these matters it has often been said to me, "But is not this only feeling? Is it not dangerous to trust to 'your feelings'?" I always answer somewhat as follows. Of course, no single faculty can be trusted by itself. But each has its use.

All first-hand knowledge is gained by means of feeling. What are our bodily senses but various forms of feeling? I only know that there is a floor beneath my feet because I feel it there. I know that someone spoke a moment ago because of that kind of feeling in the nerves of my ears which we call sound. Some of us are inclined to distrust our feelings in religion because we have known a debauchery of religion which was simply an attempt to stir up the feelings with a kind of intoxication, people exciting themselves by singing hymns and shouting for the mere pleasure of it. I think in common fairness we ought to recognise that even this has often served the purpose of arousing people from their contentment with godless living and that it has produced benefits which the more frigid and respectable practice of using religion as an anodyne cannot profess to rival. But excitement for excitement's sake is not religion at all, for it fails to bind us to God. Feeling is useful as a means, valuable as a bye-product, but dangerous as an end. It always seems to me like warming a thermometer for the fun of seeing the mercury go up. You take a chance of bursting the apparatus, and do nothing towards increasing

the comfort of the room. It is to be remembered that feeling is a more comprehensive term than emotion (in the popular sense). But even of emotion it must be said that we are in some danger of forgetting that it has real value. Men have left their all and gone out and faced death for us in reliance on the emotion produced in them by a menace to our country and our liberty. It was an emotion which gave vent to no shouting or rhetoric, but it sustained them through the squalid horrors of those fearful years. How is love detected but by emotion? How can we be raised by that which leaves us unmoved? Emotion is indispensable as a means of judging what is happening in us and to us; it indicates the character of our re-action to our surroundings and so discloses the nature of the impression which they make upon us. To be more precise, the uprising of an emotion indicates a change in us. It is therefore of great importance to notice it for we are only made aware of life by means of its changes. When life goes on at an even pace it is unfelt and unobserved. A person in normal health is not aware of his body, unless he exercises it with unusual violence. When sitting in a room of

an even temperature we do not feel it hot or cold, but if the temperature rises or falls we experience an emotion, we have a feeling, which betrays the change. If we go into a church in which incense is burnt we smell it strongly for the first few minutes, and then the feeling dies down and is probably forgotten: we feel the change of atmosphere, but not a condition which has become uniform.

Now the observation of change as an index to facts is of great importance in the spiritual life. At certain points in the Communion service there is a definite change and an intensification of life. Chief amongst these are the uplift of the Creed, of the Sursum Corda, of the Sanctus and of the Consecration. Observe these moments, for they produce in us a re-action and a consequent emotion which is of the highest value as an indication of the nearer approach of God. Do not disregard or despise this because it is slight or difficult to observe. An electrician does not choose to detect his current by receiving a violent shock; he prefers to see the gentle movement of a needle. God does not batter us with His Facts unless we are stubborn and obtuse. He has no intention of straining or wrecking the instru-

ments He has made. The religious experiences about which we hear are usually startling, but we hear of them because they are startling and easily described, not because they form the normal type. It is quite possible to observe the force of gravitation without being hit on the head like Newton. If we had lived when our Lord was on the earth and had met Him, we might never have seen or heard anything startling. How quiet and even commonplace was the call of the first apostles! We forget that we always surround the events of His earthly mission with the glory of its long results, and we expect to see the same glory hang about events which have had no time to produce results. No doubt some tough natures only yield to God's power with an explosion, but the deep forces of life are as quiet as they are far-reaching. The beginnings of the knowledge of God are not always striking, nor its progress startling. Life has a way of stealing in, and He Who is the Life adjusts His Coming so finely that we are not disturbed or thrown off our balance. Yet He moves us, and though the sensation produced in us is but slight yet it is perceptible. The spiritual atmosphere may seem very little

different, but it is different. We have not the same feelings at the Creed as at the Sanctus, nor are they the same at the Sanctus as at the Consecration or the Reception. We are too apt to assume that Christ must make a tremendous impression if He really comes, forgetting that the extent of the impression depends on our capacity to receive it, and on what degree of contrast it has to our past. So for most of us the emotion will be pitched in a very low key, since our sensitiveness is but nascent, and while He has been pressing Himself on our attention for so long, we have been permitting indifference and insensitiveness to take the place which might have been occupied by a growing power of acquiring knowledge.

In any case the change in your frame of mind, the emotion which is aroused in you, however feeble it may be, is worth more to you than all the records of the experiences of the greatest saints, because it is your own way of perceiving God. This kind of feeling is more intense at the Sacrament, but it is not peculiar to it. The Presence of Christ is with us continually. He said "Lo, I am with you always," and He keeps His word. So we can

elucidate our feelings at the altar by taking a wider range of observation, and applying the knowledge gained in one field to another. It is this same Person with Whom we come into touch at all our prayers—nay, at all our affairs, though in varying degrees and perhaps in varying ways. The more characteristic impression made at the Altar in the midst of the Fellowship will be more clearly received and grasped if we have detected it where we have not so many advantages. On the other hand, if we bear in mind the impression made at the Sacrament we shall discern it even where it is blurred and overlaid by the dust of the street.

I feel guilty of a certain impertinence in pointing out these things; but a child may often do good by chattering about what its elders are too shy to tell. I feel that I have missed so much for want of someone who would give me some direction and encouragement that I am bound to try to give to others the help which I value so highly because I was long benumbed by the lack of it. I find, too, that there are many who know, but do not realise that they know, and I would fain help them to the confidence which is born of experience.

It almost seems like sacrilege to discuss the impression made on us as we receive the Communion. The thought of it makes me feel like laying down my pen for ever, like Aquinas. But I will venture to suggest that this, the moment when, having received, we kneel there in silence, a silence of body, mind and spirit, is the key to all. We ought therefore to recollect it deliberately and carefully afterwards, later in the day, and to train ourselves as time goes on to join each new recollection to the others so that they may grow into one, enlarging and deepening our comprehension. I would not dare to describe these impressions even to myself, for they are their own and only description. But they are the crown of our knowledge, the stillness in which all the forces of life converge in perfect balance and harmony, the very peace of God. If their light is thus permitted to add to itself and is cherished tenderly and lovingly, it will burn in our hearts with a steady flame which shall so transmute all our substance that we shall become the lucent lamps of the Lord.

IX

DISCERNING THE LORD'S BODY

IN introducing the next step in the progress of the service, I wish to say a little more about feeling and perception. As I have been pointing out, we feel changes and changes only; when these cease, feeling dies down. If we look fixedly at a given spot, our sight (which is a variety of feeling) fails after a few moments and we only see a blur; but if the eye is allowed to roam about the object it gets sufficient change to enable the feeling to remain distinct. This motion of the eye is the ordinary condition of our physical sight, and a similar movement is necessary to our spiritual sight. Therefore besides the changes provided for us by the succession of stages in the service, we have to secure a change during the con-

tinuance of each stage by moving our gaze to and fro. In the effort to see Christ we cannot afford to lose the advantage given us by the large and diversified field in which He can be perceived. The Living Lord is before us and within us, and the "Mystical Body" the organism of spirits by means of which He makes Himself felt is around us. We ought to shift our attention backwards and forwards from the central Presence to the Mystical Body, from Christ as He enters us to that great Body which He inhabits and to Him as He inhabits that Body. We do not lose sight of Him or really look away from Him even as much as when the eye is looking at a picture of which He is the central figure. Our spiritual senses are continually being exercised instead of being dazed, and we see Him all the more clearly, not only because we have definite points at which to look, but also because we see those in whom He dwells. A little consideration of all this would enable many to grasp what is set before them, and would remedy much disappointing failure both at the Communion and at other times of prayer. By keeping others in view whenever we come to our Lord we are enabled to see

Him the better for ourselves. Because our action is truly corporate, it gives full scope for the development of our personality.

This plan of action is carried on by saying the Lord's Prayer, which compels us to think of one another since it is *Our* Father, *our* daily bread and so on all the way. Besides there is a special fitness in the mention of Heaven and the Kingdom, both of which are descriptions of our surroundings for where Christ is there is Heaven, and these persons with Christ their King form the Kingdom. Even more pertinent is the consideration that having been made one with Him and one with one another in Him, it is but natural that we should take His words on our lips so that we may frame heart and mind to them, thus perfecting our identity with Him.

Let us now pass to the Prayers of Oblation and Thanksgiving. We are shown how to surmount a difficulty which looks very great when considered in words. We have got into the way of talking of the Risen Body, of the Body which we receive and the "Mystical" Body as though they were different things, forgetting that, had they not had a great deal in common, different terms would have been

used by the New Testament writers, and not one identical name. Thinking of them separately we can only perceive one at one time and another at another. Prepossessed by the thought of our own bodies in their present condition, we cannot imagine how to fit all this together if indeed we ever try. But the facts cohere both in idea and position. It is the Risen Lord in His Risen Body Who gives us His Body by which we become identified with the organisation of the faithful which is identified with the Risen Lord as His Body. We present the Body as it is in the Sacrament, but not only in that mode. We use all our modes of perception but find that we are looking at one and only one Person. As we look before us, around us and within, we have a uniform impression, we experience precisely the same feelings. In the Prayer of Oblation we say "accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving" (i.e. the sacrifice which is characterised by prayer and thanksgiving) and go on to say "here we offer and present ourselves, our souls and bodies to be a . . . sacrifice unto Thee," thus making a sacrifice of ourselves, which is so closely connected with the one perfect and sufficient

Sacrifice as to be identified with it. The whole of our nature, "our souls and bodies," is presented to God because we are part of the Body of Christ, or, to look at it from the other side, the Body of Christ has permeated us and made us one with itself. We need to grasp the fact, destructive of neat phrases but so necessary for the free and healthy movement of the mind, that (1) our Lord is present in the Sacrament, (2) He is present in the receiver, and (3) He is present in the whole company of saints of which we have been made more lively members. What God hath joined together let not man put asunder.

Two Mysteries, the food which consists of the Body and Blood, and the Mystical Body are associated with one another in the Prayer of Thanksgiving. A "Mystery" was an association of persons who made a corporate approach to their god. Their form of service consisted in a dramatic setting forth of their belief, and, at least in certain cases, a meal supposed to be eaten in company with the god. So the term Mystery was applied at once to a company of "brethren," to the object of their belief and the meal at which they believed that they met their god and had his powers

imparted to them. It is interesting, though outside our scope, to notice the parallel between the dramatic setting forth of the path of redemption in the ancient Mysteries and the "shewing forth of the Lord's death" in the Communion. Returning to our present subject, however, this term, the Mysteries, couples together the idea of the members and of the whole body, the human worshippers and the divine help, just in the way of which we have been thinking. As the admission to their meal marked full membership in the Mystery, so admission to this meal certifies that "we are very members incorporate in the mystical Body of Thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ . . . the company of all faithful people." But this certification is not simply for the comfort of the individual, it is meant to keep our common life and our fellow-members before our minds. So we are to gather up in our hearts as many of the "company of all faithful people" as possible—and that phrase, faithful people is very elastic. They need not divert our thoughts from Him, for they are members of Him and in the spiritual light of the moment we see Him revealed in them. In consequence we are made

capable of discerning and identifying Him in our fellows even when outward things interpose a distorting medium between our spirits and theirs. We gain a true spiritual perception which is the gift of God, the product of the enhancement of our faculties by the Holy Spirit. But, it must be emphasised, this is not obtained by staring fixedly at any one point, but by walking in the path of the Lord, which wound its way, and still winds its way, in and out amongst a crowded humanity.

We are not permitted to see His Body as it was on earth, but that greater Body which is being built up to form a more adequate expression of His life and a more sufficient instrument for His energies. We might prefer to see the former Body, but our perception of the mystical Body gives us real knowledge, knowledge from within. My eye can see the body of another person clearly and as a whole, because it is at a distance from him and stands apart from him. It cannot see my own body so extensively or so well, but it is aware of the life in my body and responds to it as it cannot do to the life in the body of another. Our view of the Body of Christ is limited in the same way as the perception of

a cell or an organ is limited: it can only feel what is near to it, but it feels the whole life through the cells and organs all around it, and feels that life far more intimately. I fear that we have too often striven to obtain an outside view of Christ, forgetting that this involves standing at a distance from Him and ignoring the perception which we are already fitted to exercise.

The range of our gaze now includes the revelation of Christ in the Sacrament, in ourselves, and in the Mystical Body around us. We are to go on traversing these three points, but in the Gloria in Excelsis we are to extend the movement of our thoughts so as to reach through our Lord into the being of the Father and of the Holy Ghost. With the very first words, "Glory be to God on high," we sweep up to where the intellect is left lagging behind and the spirit is fused into the Life of lives for the moment. "Glory be to God"; we are not making a contribution of our own to the Glory of God: that is not in our power. We send back the light which has shone in our hearts, and we are carried along with it. It seems to be a law of the spiritual life that it flows in a circuit, from God, through us and

then back to God. Sometimes we devote our energies to making that circuit; we strive to maintain contact with God, and with some member of the Body whom we bring into touch with Him, so that grace may flow from Him through us, through them and so return to its Source. Sometimes, as here, we let ourselves be carried along by that tide which keeps the orbit of grace, the circuit of divine power, in existence and form. We are swept back through a transformed earth where the grace of God pervades the life of men, "in earth peace, good-will towards men."[1] This is but the first circle of the spirit's exultant flight; its curve will bring us round again though with a varied sweep. But before we pass on, we ought to recognise why these particular words are used to help us to make a start. They are the words of the angels at the proclamation of the Incarnation. We are consequently reminded of the Hosts who throng the Being of God further than our thoughts can reach, although He transcends even them, and we are also reminded of the Incarnate Lord dwelling amidst His people.

[1] If the more correct reading (as I believe), "Peace on earth to men of goodwill," were used, we should have the track of grace, passing through the Mystical Body, indicated in a very exact manner.

Then again contemplating God we rise towards Him with rapid, ensuing strokes of the spirit's wings, praise, blessing, worship, glory and that glad dwelling on the beauty of God for which we have only the poor word "thanks." Then all thought of self and even of the feeling aroused in us is abandoned, and there is only God Himself, "Lord God"; then again God with His subjects, "Heavenly King"; and finally both combined in "God the Father Almighty," which reaches downwards to His children in "Father" and upwards into the hiddenness of God in "Almighty."

Then we return to the lower heaven, to our Lord in the Sacrament and in ourselves, for we must not forget that we have become shrines of the Presence. "Lamb of God" recalls the point from which we started, the service in Heaven where the Lamb on the altar-throne is the centre and outlet of their adoration, and also the Sacrament in our midst. "That takest away the sins of the world," Who art altering me and all my little world. "Have mercy"; not "show pity" only; His mercies include life, wisdom, happiness, love and every other gift procured by the indwell-

ing of the Lord, Who makes us lords over both self and circumstance. "Receive our prayer"; draw up our aspirations. "Thou that sittest at the right hand of God" and yet deignest to be in the Sacrament and hence in us, how marvellous is Thy condescension, how near and thrilling Thy power! Finally we are plunged into the depths of the Divine Being through that unearthly, human and super-human life to which holiness belongs. Among all who appear in earth no other is divine, no other is God's road to God, "Thou only art holy, Thou only art the Lord, Thou only O Christ with the Holy Ghost art most high in the glory of God the Father." We end in that blaze of light which marks the culmination and limit of our powers, the Glory of God the Father. So high is the reach of the Body as it soars into the life of God to plunge into His depths that the individual is often left a little dazed and breathless. Nor is it to be wondered at that he remembers so little of what has passed, if he has really tried to lean on the flying thoughts that lie behind the words, for relying on the experience that lies behind the words, they rise to experiences which are too

profound for words, in regions to which the spirit can struggle, but the brain has not learned to follow.

I remember hearing one of Beethoven's compositions which seized on my imagination and transported me into an Eastern land lit by a setting sun. Little by little the quiet of evening grew and the music died down, till for a few priceless moments the stayed hand of the conductor held orchestra and audience in a silence which made the desert almost visible and folded us in the calm of immense, sleeping spaces. No music has ever wrought on me as did that intense, pregnant silence. Just such a silence holds us when the words of the Gloria die away into the ineffable calm of God. Words, even thoughts, would shatter its greatness. It may be hard counsel for this word-worshipping age, but it is imperative that we pay regard to that silence, for it is the Peace of God, and in those very words, deferred till the close of that supreme moment, it takes its shape, "The Peace of God which passeth understanding." It must always be a moving phrase, but never so moving as when it has been charged by that preceding silence

in which understanding and imagination are stilled and the Hosts of Heaven rest their hearts on the God of Peace.

X

THE BLESSING OF THE FELLOWSHIP

IN the concluding act of the service, the Blessing, the ideas of the Sacrament are gathered up, and presented in another way. The celebrant becomes the mouthpiece, not now of those assembled in church with him, but of the whole incorporation, the whole Body of Christ, and of Him Who speaks through that Body. So instead of facing the same way as the congregation (as he does when he acts as their spokesman) he turns towards them, and conveys the happiness of the whole Body and the Divine Life which inspires it, in words which admirably suggest the steady and continuous flow of vital power from the Divine Head through the Body and through each of the little aggregations of friends of which it is composed. Though here described

by another name, the Peace of God, it is the same life which has already been vivifying us. It is the true peace, the peace of perfect life, the poise of balanced motion, the stillness which accompanies perfect mental activity, the peace of a quiet home where each person moves tranquilly through the quiet hours, stayed by linked powers of love, which cannot suffer disturbance. We had occasion to notice this peace when first we entered the church, before the service began, and now that we have been immersed more deeply in it we need to study its nature afresh, to fix it in our memories and to set our hearts on it that it may be with us wherever we go, steadying and tranquillising us. We need to grasp its character with our minds so that we may be able to detect it under all the restlessness and flurry of daily life. Also, as we scrutinised this peace as a disclosure of God at the beginning of the service, we ought to set our minds on it again, so that being constantly remembered it may continually be felt, thus keeping "our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God."

Notice that to the very last all loneliness and self-centredness are shut out, for it is still "your," "you," "you," and the Peace is to

be felt as the effect of continued association with others, for the blessing is said to be "among you" and not only "in you." To outward appearance the gathering of the Fellowship is to be dispersed a few moments later. But as a matter of fact it is not; the spirits, the real selves which have entered into Communion with one another in Christ, remain in Communion and we can feel their nearness whenever we will. He in Whom we are made one said "Lo, I am with you always even to the end of the world," and we ought continually to lift up our eyes to those who have been gathered together in His Name, and behold Him in the midst of them. We must lay hold of the fact that we do not keep the Peace of God by withdrawing ourselves, even partially, from others, or reserving some sealed and secret shrine within our hearts, from which all others are shut out. This Peace is a relationship to others, as well as a condition in oneself; and even the state of peace within oneself is largely the poise of the forces which radiate among the members of that Kingdom which is constituted by the King of Kings. We must steadfastly endeavour to maintain that rela-

tionship, and that not only for our own sakes, but in order to foster that state of peace among our beloved, that setting of them as so many stars fixed in their orbits around our Sun and in their places in this system, which we have sought to secure during the service. When we have finished the Communion Office, we are to continue the offices of friendship.

The word Blessing adds a distinctive touch of its own, for on our Lord's lips it meant the gift of happiness. Surely that is the object for which a fellowship banquets together. Even in the midst of dangers and difficulties friends rise from the social meal cheered and strengthened. This gift of God has been given to us during the service, but once again we are confronted with the necessity for paying attention to what goes on, and remarking it, just as a child remarks on all he sees, lest it be first unnoticed and then forgotten. True happiness is apt to be unconscious, but unconscious happiness is easily let slip. The unobservant eye will never learn the value of this or any other blessing, nor will it make the heart take such a hold on it that no hostile thought or mood shall be able to oust it.

The service is now over, but it is a natural custom for each person to follow it up with a little act of thanksgiving of his own. This is a matter which must be left entirely to the discretion of the individual, but I would venture to suggest a form which seems adequate and yet conveniently brief. First the part of the Te Deum which begins with "Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ" and ends with "Make them to be numbered with Thy saints in glory everlasting." This gives us a fitting hymn of praise to our Lord, combined with a remembrance of those for whom we have prayed. Especially fitting are the words "Make them to be numbered with Thy saints in glory everlasting," not some day in the future, but from now, as we have been beholding them in the family of God. Secondly, the Lord's Prayer which confirms us in His own attitude of mind. Finally, the Nunc Dimittis, "Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace," the hymn of a departure which is no departure, for it is really "depart *into* peace," or if you like to follow our own idiom, "depart in peace," with the peace of God around and within. "For mine eyes have seen" Him Who is

"Thy Salvation," and have been filled with the glow of hope, for He is "a light to lighten the Gentiles," the outsiders, and "the glory of Thy people Israel," the household of God. This leads into "Glory be to the Father," a perfect act of adoration and thanksgiving which ends with those words of profoundest peace, "as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end," the peace which history cannot disturb nor time mar.

Then we get up from our knees and go out into the street. In a minute or two we realise that our feelings have changed for the worse and that we have left behind us the serenity which filled the House of God. We have sunk to the old level. We are made aware that our minds have sagged and sagged badly. In consequence we are filled with a sense of failure and depression, and we begin to wonder whether our going to the Communion was not a mistake after all. I think that this is due to looking at the matter from the wrong end. It is true that we get back to something like the level of our ordinary feelings, dropping from the elevation to which we had been borne: but the extent of the drop is the measure of the height to which we had been

raised. It is really a source of cheer. It makes us feel how valuable the service is. What we are made cognisant of is the contrast between the light of our Lord's presence and the greyness of common day. It affords a comparison by which we can truly estimate the brightness of His Coming. Why was that sight of Him given to us? In order that we should go out into the world where He is so strangely mingled with humanity, feel its greyness intolerable, and endeavour to detect and reflect the scattered light which prevents it from becoming utter blackness. This despair which threatens us is but a device of Satan, the great Belittler, who fosters every tendency to make the worst of things, the purpose of which is to divert us from the recollection of having been shown the glory of life and the height of our better self above our lower. We were put into contact with the power of God in order that it may flow out through us, even in the dusty, sordid streets of the world, so that it may steal into the hearts of those about us, silent and unobserved yet life-giving and fruitful, like some little spring that makes a corner of an ashen waste grow and blossom. That power cannot be

destroyed; the grace of God must change the ugliness of sin; that grace never runs to utter waste; God cannot be destroyed and the grace and power of God are God Himself. I believe that this holds true even when we allow our minds to be distracted, for the heart once set holds steady to its pole even when the mind is turned awry like a straw. But the temptation should be recognised as a temptation and regarded as a challenge. We ought to make an effort to remember; we ought to bring back to our minds the condition which we had attained: we ought to dispose ourselves to the same feelings, so that we may be sensitive to Him Who is their cause, and perceive by their renewal that He is still near.

That elevation, that elation which we felt at our devotions was a disclosure of the intensity of the life of the Body, of the vigour which comes into the individual life when it identifies itself with the corporate life. We are still members of the Body, the divinely constituted corporation, we are to go on living its life and to continue our thanksgiving by continuing in the Fellowship. The best way of thanking God for the Communion is to persist in helping people—that shows real

appreciation. Make a steady effort to view them as you have been learning to do, seeing them greater because you see them closer, and you both encourage what is best in them and are yourself more drawn to love them. You have seen the lovable aspect of your neighbour and beheld him at his best; hold fast to it and refuse to be blinded by his worst. The exaltation had to pass away, for we are meant to labour on the plain, and though it is the same light that shows us our path in the shadowed valley, yet it cannot be so moving as the blaze of the sunrise on the open skies. But we can work the better for having seen the glory of the Dawn; its glow is in our hearts to be aroused by memory, and whenever it creeps up into our minds it makes us so sensitive and discerning that we discover the same light in all our surroundings. Thus is brought out the beauty of the quiet herbs and simple flowers of the wayside,—flowers of human life in which can be seen the perfect grace manifested and ministered at the Table of the Lord. We look at our friends with new and gladdened eyes, for our attention is no longer caught by the alien and repellent elements of society, but by the presence of the Fellowship. Then,

when next we come to the Communion, our entrance into it will be easy and natural, for it will just be the lifting and passing the veil through which we have been peering, the removal of all hindrance to our drawing closer and closer to those beloved lives in the one life of the one Body of Christ.

POSTSCRIPT

My chief reason for writing this book is that I have so often found the relating of these experiences helpful to others. But I am well aware how limited the observations of any one person must necessarily be. I have been very thankful for such hints as I have been able to gather from various sources, but these have been rare and I am anxious to supplement them, so as to widen and define the field of our knowledge. I should therefore be grateful to anyone who has anything to add out of his own experience, if he would be so kind as to communicate with me.

I must in conclusion thank the friends who have given so much time and thought to the endeavour to help me to clarify my attempts at describing what I have known and observed.

R.O.P.T.

The College,
Millport,
Scotland.

KU-997-708